

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 11, 2016

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to urge that at the upcoming U.S. – ASEAN summit you raise concerns with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in Sunnylands, California over the Vietnamese government's pattern of serious violations of internationally recognized human rights, especially as Vietnam aggressively seeks to expand trade with the United States.

After twenty years of diplomatic relations with the United States and billions of dollars in U.S. trade and investment, the government of Vietnam continues to treat its own citizens – particularly those who share our democratic values – in ways that suggest a different approach is needed. Most troubling are the arrests and detention of human rights lawyer and former prisoner of conscience Nguyen Van Dai and writer Nguyen Huu Vinh.

Your administration should insist that Vietnam free all of the political prisoners and other prisoners of conscience it now holds, such as Father Nguyen Van Ly, the Venerable Thich Quang Do, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, Bui Thi Minh Hang, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, Doan Huy Chuong, Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, and Nguyen Van Minh.

We hope you will urge the Vietnamese government to repeal all laws and administrative decrees that deny freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly – such as the laws criminalizing “propaganda against the state” and “taking advantage of democratic freedoms to injure the national unity” – and enact laws codifying and protecting the fundamental human rights the government now routinely violates. We hope you will also make clear that the government must stop arresting pro-democracy bloggers and others who use the Internet to criticize the government and that it must release those who are imprisoned.

It is also essential that the Vietnamese government eliminate the onerous requirement that all religious organizations submit to close supervision by the government as a precondition for worship services and other activities. The latest draft law on religion being considered in the Vietnamese National Assembly, which would further impede independent religious communities, should instead be redrafted to recognize that freedom of religion is a basic right that is not conditional on registration with and approval by the government.

Similarly, we ask that you urge the Vietnamese government, by introducing the country's first ever law on association, to permit the existence of genuinely independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Instead, the government has created dozens of synthetic NGOs controlled by the Communist Party and its constituent entities including the “Fatherland Front” and the “Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations” (VUFO). We are also concerned about reports that members of non-governmental organizations are not able to move freely and that some have had their passports confiscated.


The Vietnamese government must also allow Vietnamese workers to form labor unions that are truly independent of the government and of the Communist Party. It must also end the practice of forced labor and prosecute officials of state-owned labor export companies that are involved in human trafficking. The Vietnamese government engages in trafficking in persons through forced labor in "rehabilitation" centers, detention centers, and prisons, as well as by sending its citizens into modern-day slavery in countries around the world and punishing victims who object to such treatment.

Finally, the Vietnamese government should agree to a process to resolve claims for compensation made by U.S. citizens whose property has been confiscated. The government has illegally confiscated the real and personal property of many Vietnamese-Americans and this practice continues to the present day.

We hope you will make clear to the Vietnamese authorities that further expansion of the United States trade and security relationship with their government will not be acceptable to your Administration, to Congress, or to the American people unless it is contingent upon significant, verifiable and irreversible improvements in human rights practices.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

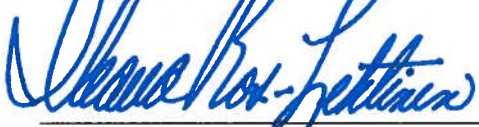
Sincerely,



REP. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress



REP. LORETTA SANCHEZ  
Member of Congress



REP. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Member of Congress



REP. ZOE LOFGREN  
Member of Congress



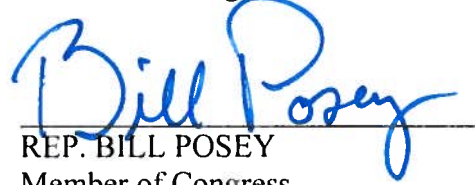
REP. DANA ROHRABACHER  
Member of Congress



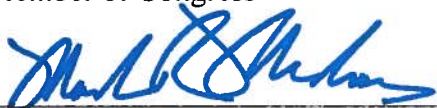
REP. ALAN S. LOWENTHAL  
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REP. JOSEPH R. PITTS  
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REP. BILL POSEY  
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REP. MARK MEADOWS  
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