

CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH TORTURE IN VIETNAM

JOINT STATEMENT

January 16, 2014

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, join our collective voices and efforts in support of the Campaign to Abolish Torture in Vietnam. The campaign advocates for humane treatment of detainees and prisoners in Vietnam and elimination of the practice of torture and other abuses in Vietnamese prisons, jails, police stations, re-education centers, psychiatric institutions and other places of detention.

The right to be free from torture is among the most fundamental and unequivocal human rights. The prohibition against torture is absolute and can never be justified under any circumstances. There are no limitations on the right to be free from torture; it cannot be suspended in times of war, when national security is threatened, or during other public emergencies.

Many of the basic safeguards against torture and other abuses of prisoners and detainees, as well as due process protections, are enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a state party. With Vietnam's election to the United Nations Human Rights Council and its signing of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment in November 2013, we call on the government of Vietnam to demonstrate its commitment to human rights by taking prompt steps to abolish the use of torture in Vietnam.

We will measure Vietnam's progress in eliminating torture by the government's timely implementation of the following milestones:

1. Prompt ratification of the Convention against Torture (CAT) and signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, a treaty that supplements CAT and strengthens its preventive mandate.
2. Prohibition of the practices of holding prisoners and detainees for prolonged periods in incommunicado detention and solitary confinement, which not only facilitate and perpetuate the torture of detainees, but in some circumstances can themselves amount to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
3. Commitment to a timetable by which the government will authorize independent monitoring of all prisons, re-education centers, and other places of detention in Vietnam by both international and domestic monitoring bodies to investigate allegations of physical abuse and torture of prisoners and detainees and enforce the absolute prohibition on such abuses by police, security officials, prison and detention center staff, and other detainees.
4. Acceptance of country visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and officials of the International Labor Organization, with unfettered access to prisons, detention centers, psychiatric institutions, re-education camps, drug detention centers, jails, police lock-ups, and other places of detention.

5. Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention No. 105 (Abolition of Forced Labor), which prohibits forced or compulsory labor of prisoners convicted of political offenses or because of racial, social, national, or religious discrimination; and publication of a list of all forms of work in which prisoners and detainees are involved, which products are processed using detainee or prison labor, and the companies whose products are processed using detainee or prison labor.
6. Implementation of and adherence to basic safeguards against torture and other abuses of detainees that are enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Vietnam is a party. The ICCPR prohibits arbitrary detention and torture, and protects the rights of people deprived of their liberty, including the right to prompt access to legal advice and a fair trial.
7. Publication of a central registry of the names and locations of all persons held in pretrial detention, as well as a list of all those convicted and sentenced, and the relevant charges or reasons for their detention or imprisonment.
8. Establishment of an independent mechanism allowing prisoners to submit complaints without the knowledge of prison guards directly responsible for them, along with provisions to protect detainees who raise concerns or complaints from being subject to retribution from prison authorities or individuals acting on their behalf.
9. Disclosure of the number of law enforcement officers who have been investigated, indicted, prosecuted, or brought to justice in connection to torture or abuse of detainees or prisoners.
10. Commitment to a timetable to repeal laws that penalize peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and religion, including laws on national security and public order, religious belief and practice, and administrative detention.

Civil society organizations and individual citizens play important watchdog roles in monitoring torture and mistreatment of detainees and prisoners in Vietnam. We call on international human rights organizations, concerned governments, and Vietnam's development partners to support and defend the brave advocates who step forward to report incidents of torture and other abuses of detainees and prisoners in Vietnam, and hold Vietnamese authorities accountable in implementing the Convention against Torture.

The Campaign to Abolish Torture in Vietnam welcomes the participation of all concerned organizations and individuals inside and outside of Vietnam. To join the campaign, please sign up with CATVN2014@gmail.com or at <http://stoptorture-vn.org>.

Association of Con Dau Parishioners, USA

Boat People SOS (BPSOS), USA & Asia

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK

Coalition to Abolish Modern-day Slavery in Asia (CAMSA), USA, Canada & Germany

Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam, USA

Council of Indigenous Peoples in Today's Vietnam, USA
Dignity International, Malaysia
Forum Vietnam 21, Germany
Guarantee Living-Wage Job Opportunities, USA
Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation (Overseas), USA
Hmong National Development, USA
International Office of Champa, USA
Khmer Krom Foundation, USA
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice, USA
Montagnard Human Rights Organization, USA
Nguyen Kim Dien Priests Group, Vietnam
Organization of Overseas Vietnamese for the Protection of Human Rights in Vietnam, Germany
Pax Romana-ICMICA
United CaoDai TayNinh Holy See Overseas, USA
The Vietnamese American Community of Washington,D.C, Maryland & Virginia
Vietnamese Historical Association in European Union, Switzerland
Vietnamese League for Human Rights in Switzerland
Vietnamese Women for Human Rights
VETO! Human Rights Defenders Network, Germany

(Updated list is available at: <http://www.stoptorture-vn.org/about.html>)