



COALITION for a **FREE & DEMOCRATIC VIETNAM**

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LIÊN MINH cho một **VIỆT NAM TỰ DO** và **DÂN CHỦ**

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## **Freedom and Democracy for Vietnam Advocacy Day**

July 15 & 16, 2014

Vietnamese Americans have held demonstrations across the country to express concern over the increasingly tense situation in the South China Sea, most recently aggravated by China's placement of an oil rig within Vietnam's claimed exclusive economic zone. Filipino Americans have joined a number of these demonstrations. We urge the U.S. government to take a firm public stance about protecting peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, which will affect the interests of many Southeast Asian nations and also of the United States and the free world.

We are also concerned about the deteriorating human rights conditions in Vietnam. To deflect criticism the Vietnamese government from time to time releases a few prisoners of conscience, only to arrest many more. The Vietnamese authorities continue to suppress independent religious communities and even to force believers to renounce their faith. The police continue to use torture and other forms of brutality against political and religious dissidents, at times causing severe injuries and even deaths.

The United States government presently has a number of opportunities to use leverage to insist on dramatic improvements in the Vietnamese government's human rights practices. These include the nuclear cooperation agreement, the lifting of U.S. ban on transfer and sale of lethal weapons, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In particular, Vietnam has little to contribute to the TPP. As a one-party state ruled by the Communist Party, Vietnam guarantees in its Constitution the dominance of the state sector over the national economy. Vietnam ranks extraordinarily low in all aspects of economic performance and in the key factors needed for genuinely free trade (see table below). The Vietnamese government also does not permit free and independent labor unions.

As Vietnam seeks expanded trade and security benefits from the United States, our government should make such expansion contingent upon significant and irreversible improvements in human rights, particularly freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion.

	<b>Vietnam (index or rank)</b>	<b>Country closest to Vietnam among the TPP negotiating partners</b>	<b>Source</b>
GDP per capita	\$1,755/year	Peru (\$6,796/year)	World Bank
Economic freedom	147 out of 165 ranked countries	Mexico (55)	Freedom House
Corruption perception	116 out of 177 countries ranked	Mexico (106)	Transparency International
Respect for intellectual property rights	108 out of 130 countries ranked	South Korea ranks 130	The Property Rights Alliance
Press freedom`	172 out of 179 countries ranked	Mexico (149)	Reporters without Borders

We ask that House members:

- o Co-sponsor the Asia-Pacific Region Priority Act (H.R. 4495) and the Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act (H.R. 4254).
- o Sign on to the letter to the President that was initiated by Congressman Frank Wolf and/or write a separate letter to the President urging our government to place high priority on human rights as an essential element of the TPP negotiations with Vietnam.
- o “Adopt” a Vietnamese prisoner of conscience under the Defending Freedom Project of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

We ask that Senators:

- o Co-sponsor the Vietnam Human Rights Act (S. 1649) and the Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act (S. 929).

We would also like to thank the Senate for unanimously passing S. Res. 412, calling on China to withdraw its HD-981 drilling rig and associated maritime forces from their current positions and to return immediately to the status quo as it existed before May 1, 2014.