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## *House of Representatives*

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE, PASTOR DUONG KIM KHAI

HON TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2014*

Mr. Speaker, Pastor Duong Kim Khai, a prisoner held in Vietnam, has nurtured the spiritual lives of his parishioners and helped those of all faiths that have been victims of injustice in Ben Tre and Dong Thap. He has also served as an advocate for Vietnamese farmers whose land was confiscated by the government. If he is guilty of anything it is of living to serve others and stand up to an oppressive government. I call on the Vietnamese government to release him immediately.

During the 1990s, the Pastor was detained thirteen times, often for organizing prayer sessions. Soon after, he turned his home into a place of worship, as well as a community center where farmers could seek assistance in petitioning authorities. Because he did not have the government's permission to worship, his home was seized by the local government, and he was imprisoned for two years.

On August 16, 2010, he was arrested for supposedly trying to overthrow the Vietnamese government, a convenient charge from a government bent on silencing him. For the next two months, his place of detention and his condition of health were kept secret from his family.

Denied legal representation and with diplomats denied access to his trial, Pastor Duong Kim Khai was sentenced to 2-8 years in prison and 3-5 probation. Unfortunately, his wife, who was never able to visit her husband in prison, has since passed away.

Pastor Duong Kim Khai's trial was a sham and his imprisonment is unacceptable. Freedom to worship is a human right, and the Vietnamese government should immediately release him. Furthermore, I call on the State Department to finally recognize Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern.

And that's just the way it is.