

H.E. Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc,
Prime Minister of Viet Nam
16 Le Hong Phong Street,
Ba Dinh District,
Ha Noi, Viet Nam

December 7, 2020

Re: Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyền and other prisoners on hunger strike over prison conditions in An Đầm Prison, Quảng Nam Province

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, would like to bring to your attention the situation of Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyền and some other prisoners of conscience in **An Đầm** Prison who started a hunger strike in November to protest mistreatment, unresolved grievances, and violations of Vietnam's **2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments** by the prison supervisors and by the **Police Department of Management of Prison, Compulsory Re-education Center and Reformatory (C10)** under the Ministry of Public Security.

The An Đầm Prison supervisors have confiscated multiple letters that Mr. Truyền sent home without providing explanations. In January 2019, several hundred letters sent to Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyền by his Norwegian supporters via the office of Stefanus Alliance International, a Christian mission and human rights organization in Norway, were intercepted. Mr. Truyền did not receive any letter. Mr. Truyền has pre-existing medical conditions and lately developed severe joint pain, but he has not received a thorough medical check-up since he was detained by the Vietnamese police more than three years ago, on July 30, 2017. Mr. Truyền is held in An Đầm Prison, Quang Nam province, a thousand kilometers away from Ho Chi Minh City where his family lives. Due to their old age and frail health, his elderly parents are unable to make the 24-hour trip each way to visit him. In 2019 and as recently as last month, Mr. Truyền sent multiple requests to the Head of C10, asking to be granted a full medical check-up and to be transferred to a prison near his family. Thus far Mr. Truyền has not received any response from C10. Mr. Truyền has been held in a separate cell from other prisoners for several months. The prolonged social isolation is an arbitrary punishment against Mr. Truyền.

The 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments introduces an entire provision on the rights and obligations of prisoners (Article 27), which guarantees, among many things, that they "receive health care, letters, ... have their lives, health, assets, dignity protected and respected, ... use prayer books, express religious belief and faiths", and "lodge complaints and denunciation". In December 2019, Lieutenant General Nguyễn Văn Sơn, Deputy Minister of Public Security, chaired the conference on the implementation of the 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments when he directed

police units at all levels to develop plans to implement the law in line with their assigned tasks and popularize the contents of the law to their officers.

While we welcome Your Excellency's **Decision 1252/QĐ-TTg - Approval of the Plan to improve the effectiveness of implementing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee**, that plan is yet to be fully implemented, as demonstrated by the ongoing arbitrary detention of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam.

Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển is a Hòa Hảo Buddhist and an advocate for freedom of religion or belief and a defender of human rights. He was the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Political & Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, an organization dedicated to assisting prisoners of conscience and their families. As a jurist, he provided pro-bono legal assistance to families of prisoners of conscience, victims of unlawful land expropriation and marginalized religious communities. In recognition of his excellent human rights advocacy, in 2011 Human Rights Watch bestowed on him the Hellman/Hammett award. And this month, Stefanus Alliance International will organize a ceremony in Oslo to honor him with the Stefanus Prize 2020.

We are troubled by the fact that this is the second time Mr. Truyển has been imprisoned due to his peaceful advocacy for freedom of religion or belief and basic human rights. He was previously arrested in 2006 and released in 2010 after serving a sentence of three years and six months in prison for “conducting propaganda” against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

We are deeply concerned that while being unjustly imprisoned, Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển has been mistreated and not protected by Vietnam's laws.

In view of the above, we urge Your Excellency to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển and everyone who is currently imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights including their rights to freedom of religion or belief;
- Ensure that all domestic legislation, in particular the **2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments** and **Decision 1252/QĐ-TTg**, are implemented fully, properly, and consistently;
- Ensure that prison conditions are improved, prisoners guaranteed the rights to lodge complaints and denunciation, and there is an open and effective mechanism to track and resolve such complaints and denunciation; and
- End the practice of punitive prison transfer to distant locations, which hinders visits by family members.

Yours sincerely,

Vietnam Coalition Against Torture

List of Signatories

ORGANIZATIONS

ADO Alevi Philosophy Center Association, Istanbul, Turkey

Asian American Association of Seattle, Seattle, Washington, USA

Association for the Advancement of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam, USA

Boat People SOS - Religious Freedom Project, USA

Buddhist Solidarity Association, USA

Campaign to Abolish Torture in Vietnam, USA

Christian Freedom International, Falls Church, Virginia, USA

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office, Washington DC, USA

Citizen Power Initiatives for China, Washington DC, USA

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Geneva, Switzerland

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

Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam, USA

Con Dau Parishioners Association, Cary, North Carolina, USA

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, France

Counterparts Veterans Association, LaPlata, Maryland, USA

CSW, United Kingdom

Defend the Defenders

Hoa Hao Buddhist Congregation – Central Overseas Executive Committee, USA

Human Rights Watch

Institute on Religion and Democracy, Washington DC, USA

International Human Rights Advocates, Washington DC, USA

Jubilee Campaign, Fairfax, Virginia, USA

Stefanus Alliance International, Norway

Stichting Vietnam Human Rights Foundation, Drenthe, The Netherlands

The 88 Project

Vietnam Coalition Against Torture

Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR), Paris, France

Vietnamese Women for Human Rights

INDIVIDUALS

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Brian Britton, International Director, Harvest Family Network, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

Dr. Grant A. McClure, Commanding Officer, Counterparts Veterans Association, Maryland, USA

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Tien Nguyen, Falls Church Virginia, USA

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