

EDWARD J. MARKEY  
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
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CHAIRMAN:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
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INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND  
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## United States Senate

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SUITE SR-218  
RUSSELL BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107  
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING  
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02203  
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312  
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508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR  
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101  
413-785-4610

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I write to you regarding three people who are currently being held by Vietnam's government and have been charged with public disorder. The three individuals, Ms. Bui Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh and Nguyen Van Minh, appear to be facing prosecution not because they actually broke Vietnam's laws, however. Instead, the Vietnamese government appears to be trying to punish these three for their involvement in a political protest. I want to request that you take what actions you can to encourage the Vietnamese government to release these three individuals.

According to reports, the three individuals are being prosecuted in connection with their efforts to visit a former political prisoner, Nguyen Bac Truyen.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, all three were part of a convoy of motorcycles from Ho Chi Minh City to the province of Dong Thap.<sup>2</sup> Vietnam's government arrested these three individuals while they were taking part in the convoy and charged them with "causing public disorder."<sup>3</sup> In late August, a court in Vietnam sentenced each of the three to between two and three years imprisonment.

The treatment of these three individuals by Vietnam's government is deplorable. While there have been reports that members of the convoy were attacked by police, I have not seen any reports that these three individuals or any other members of the convoy attempted to engage in violence or damage property. In effect, the Vietnamese government attempted to physically punish these three for their political beliefs and then, to add insult to injury, found a pretext to prosecute them for their political beliefs.

This sort of malicious treatment by a government of its own citizens is exactly the sort of thing that the United States government has long spoken out against. For many years, Americans have been able to take pride in the fact that we not only allow freedom of expression in America, but

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/viet-nam-police-beatings-outside-court-amid-crackdown-activism-2014-08-26>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/26/us-rights-vietnam-usa-idUSKBN0GQ1VZ20140826>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/26/us-rights-vietnam-usa-idUSKBN0GQ1VZ20140826>

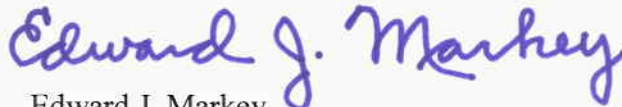
also forcefully fight for people all around the world to speak their mind without fear of government reprisal. In that regard, I was heartened to see that the US embassy in Vietnam expressed that it was “deeply concerned by the Vietnamese government’s conviction and sentencing of” these three activists.<sup>4</sup>

This conviction appears to be inconsistent with the right to freedom of expression and Vietnam’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and commitments reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We call on the government to release unconditionally these three individuals, as well as all other prisoners of conscience, and allow all Vietnamese to express their political views.<sup>5</sup>

I share the concerns of our Embassy in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government has committed to respecting the basic human rights of its citizens, including freedom of speech. For the government to find a pretext to punish its citizens for taking part in a political protest violates the spirit of several international agreements. I therefore want to urge the State Department to do what it can to convince the Vietnamese government that it should release these three individuals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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<sup>4</sup> <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/pr082614.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/pr082614.html>