

United States Senate

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October 26, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I understand that you will be traveling to Vietnam to attend the East Asia Summit at the end of the month. During this trip, I respectfully request that you follow up on your public comments on human rights at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum in July and urge the Vietnamese government to immediately release all prisoners detained for peaceful advocacy of their beliefs. It is long past time that Vietnam undertakes concrete measures to cease its continued repression of civil, political, and human rights.

In particular, I ask that you raise the following issues:

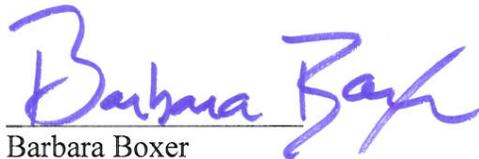
- The arbitrary detention of Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, who was sentenced in February to 42 months in prison after attempting to attend trials of fellow activists last year. She has been denied visits from the U.S. Embassy and concerned parties, despite having diabetes and tuberculosis. According to human rights groups, she was recently beaten in prison in an incident that Vietnamese authorities dismissed as a fight with another inmate.
- The use of the penal code to criminalize peaceful political activities, including the recent arrests of four members of Viet Tan, a pro-democracy party, and the sentencing in April of four people for alleged links to the Vietnam Populist Party, another opposition party. It is important that the U.S. press the Vietnamese government to release Professor Pham Minh Hoang, Pastor Duong Kim Khai, Ms. Tran Thi Thuy, Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam, Mr. Duong Au, Mr. Phung Quang Quyen, Mr. Truong Van Kim, and Ms. Truong Thi Tam. It is also important that the U.S. call on the Vietnamese government to repeal penal code articles such as Article 79 (which treats democracy promotion as subversion) and Article 88 (which bans so-called anti-state propaganda).
- The harassment and arrest of peaceful bloggers such as Nguyen Van Hai (Dieu Cay), who was recently handed down additional charges (under Article 88) to keep him in prison beyond his October 20, 2010 release date; Phan Thanh Hai, arrested on October 18; and Ta Phong Tan, currently under intrusive police surveillance.

- The arrests of workers' rights advocates such as Doan Huy Chuong, Do Thi Minh Hanh, and Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, who face trial this week on charges of disrupting security for allegedly 'inciting' strikes and distributing anti-government leaflets.
- The detention of long-time political prisoners such as Nguyen Huu Cau, 63, who has been in jail for the last 28 years after writing letters about corrupt practices by government officials in Kien Giang province.

It is clear that the Vietnamese government is failing to afford its citizens fundamental human rights. Like you, I look forward to the day when Vietnam at long last lives up to the commitments enshrined in its constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a party, and affords all its people the rights to freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right of association.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator