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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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October 9, 2012

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

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I write to you today requesting your assistance in securing the release of Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan, a democracy advocate and U.S. citizen, who was arrested by Vietnamese authorities after his arrival in the country on April 17, 2012.

Dr. Nguyen, a former high school teacher, traveled to Vietnam to visit his younger sister and also talk about democracy and the rule of law, according to his wife, Mai Huong. As a member the democracy movement Viet Tan, he has courageously stood up for the human rights of the Vietnamese people. He allegedly had materials relating to nonviolent advocacy training in his possession at the time of his arrest. The government accuses Dr. Nguyen of planning "demonstration and terrorist activities" and considers the pro-democracy party Viet Tan to be an "overseas terrorist organization."

While Vietnam's economy has flourished in recent years, it still has a deplorable record on human rights. At a May 15, 2012, hearing of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner described Vietnam's record as "discouraging and unacceptable."

Dr. Nguyen was detained without trial for allegedly organizing "terrorist activities to undermine the people's government." His arrest illustrates the continued persecution of peaceful dissent and failure of the government of Vietnam to uphold the basic human rights standards contained in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Vietnam ratified in 1982.

The ongoing injustice that Dr. Nguyen and his family face is unacceptable. For over six months, he has been separated from his wife and two sons who live in California.

Supporting the aspirations of all people to live in freedom and dignity is a bedrock principle of the United States. Under your leadership, our nation has stood up for these values worldwide.

I appreciate your stated position that the Vietnamese government's protection of these rights is necessary if they wish to form closer bilateral ties with our country.

I respectfully urge the State Department to work for the release and return of Dr. Nguyen as soon as possible and request an update on the efforts our diplomatic corps to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
Member of Congress