



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Vietnam: Human Rights

SPEECH

Tuesday, 22 November 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 22 November 2011 Page 208 Questioner Speaker Mr HAYES</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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(Fowler) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (20:16): As a member of this place I have made a commitment to publicly condemn blatant violations of essential human rights. I have taken the opportunity to speak on many occasions and particularly in parliament about my stance on human rights in Vietnam. Although we may call Vietnam a South-East Asian neighbour and a valued trading partner, I, for one, am appalled that there are more than 400 people currently incarcerated in Vietnam for exercising their fundamental human rights. This evening I want to refer specifically to recent arrests of 15 youth activists belonging to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Some of these activists are members of the John Paul II pro-life group and are from the north-central region, from Thanh Hoa and Nghe An provinces, of Vietnam.

I have been advised that the wave of arrests began 30 July 2011 when police arrested three Catholic activists at Tan Son Nhat Airport in Ho Chi Minh City as they returned from abroad. During the next seven weeks the authorities arrested 12 other religious activists. So far, 10 have been charged with violating penal code article 79, subversion of the administration, which carries a five- to 10-year sentence for an 'accomplice' and 12 years to life, or even the death penalty, for those designated as 'organisers' of those whose actions have been deemed to be of serious consequence.

I refer specifically to the following individuals, who I stress are just a few of the many human rights activists who are currently detained by the Vietnamese government. Paulus Le Son, a journalist and blogger, is from Thanh Hoa Province. He was arrested on 3 August and I am advised his whereabouts are currently unknown. Peter Ho Duc Hoa, from Yen Hoa parish, is an accountant working for the Tran Dinh stock trading company in Vinh Province. He is a member of the Catholic Professional Business Society. Francis Dang Xuan Dieu is a former Catholic student from Xuan My parish. He too is a member of the Catholic Professional Business Society and also a member of the John Paul II Life Protection Group in the Vinh diocese. John the Baptist Nguyen Van Oai, from Yen Hoa parish, works for a company in Di An, Binh Duong Province. He was arrested at the airport and taken back to his home for a house search. Peter Tran Huu Duc, an information technology student from Van Loc parish, was arrested

on 2 August. Anton Dau Van Duong, a tourism student from Van Loc parish, was arrested on the same day. Francis Dang Xuan Tong, a tourism graduate, younger brother of Dang Xuan Dieu, was arrested at midday on 3 August.

In my electorate I have the opportunity to represent a large number of Vietnamese people. Since the fall of Saigon some 36 years ago, Australia has received more than 200,000 Vietnamese refugees. For the Australian Vietnamese people, these happenings in Vietnam represent real and continuing examples of ongoing human rights abuses. Clearly it remains a major concern for many Vietnamese associations and certainly many of my constituents.

Whilst we should be proud of the fact that we have taken a leading role in developing trade in countries such as Vietnam, I strongly believe that this leading role should extend to demanding that such countries honour their commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam is a signatory. A valued trading partner needs to pay more than lip service to its international legal obligations if it is to be truly respected. As a signatory to various international conventions, Vietnam has willingly agreed to grant its citizens certain rights, including the rights to freedom and, in particular, freedom of association.

I urge all my parliamentary colleagues to join with me in working towards a genuine respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens in Vietnam. Human rights abuses, wherever they occur, should be a matter for all of us. To ignore is tantamount to excusing, which in turn leads to acceptance. (*Time expired*)