



Chris Hayes MP



FEDERAL MEMBER FOR FOWLER

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The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I write on the occasion of the forthcoming twelfth Australia-Vietnam Human Rights dialogue which is scheduled to be held in Canberra this year. This dialogue represents a crucial opportunity for the Australian government to raise pressing human rights concerns with Vietnam, particularly in relation to its adherence to international human rights obligations.

Although Vietnam has been a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights since 1982 and more recently, a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the evidence is that Vietnam continues to systematically suppress freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in the country.

Bloggers, rights activities and religious leaders are being placed under intrusive police surveillance and subjected to intimidation, harassment and imprisonment for their views.

While the Australian Government has taken an active approach in addressing and monitoring these matters through our Embassy in Hanoi and our Consulate in Saigon, unfortunately, the records of human rights abuses in Vietnam remain alarmingly high.

I refer particularly to these cases:

- **Dang Xuan Dieu, Ho Duc Hoa and Nguyen Dang Minh Man**

Arrested on 30 July 2011, together with 12 others from the Catholic Church for their involvement in mobilising support and education for children living in poverty. The group were detained for close to two years under unspecified charges before being officially sentenced under article 79 of the Penal Code for "attempting to overthrow the government" in

January 2013. In fact, this was the first in a series of arrests by the Vietnamese government in their crackdown on Vietnamese youth activists.

The People's Court of Nghe An Province sentenced the group from 3-13 years imprisonment, with Dang Xuan Dieu and Ho Duc Hoa receiving the full 13 year term. Nguyen Dang Minh Man received an 8 years prison sentence with a further 2 years under house arrest.

This case has received great international attention with the United Nations Human Rights Office also expressing serious concerns over their vague convictions and outrageously lengthy sentences.

I have been advised that these prisoners of conscience have been brutally harassed in prison and subjected to filthy living conditions.

- **Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly**

Father Ly is a Vietnamese Roman Catholic priest who has been involved in the pro-democracy movement for which he was imprisoned for a total of 15 years.

On 30 March 2007, he was arrested and sentenced under article 88 of the Penal code for "conducting propaganda against the state" for his support of Bloc 8406, a pro-democracy organisation.

During his prison term, he suffered multiple strokes which consequently left him paralysed in one arm and leg. He was released on medical parole in 2010 but was sent back to prison in 2011 to serve the rest of his eight year prison term.

For Father Ly's ongoing imprisonment and continuous non-violent protests for religious freedom, Amnesty International adopted Father Ly as a prisoner of conscience.

I understand that Father Ly's health is continuing to deteriorate in prison given the lack of treatment and medical attention.

- **Ta Phong Tan**

Ms Tan is a Vietnamese blogger who wrote many blog posts about the human rights abuses and corruption among police officers in Vietnam. Due to these critical posts against the Government, Ms Ta was arrested

and charged in 2011 under article 88 of the penal code for “propagandising against the government.”

Since her incarceration, she has held a number of hunger strikes to protest her mistreatment and that of other political prisoners. She is currently being held in solitary confinement and I am advised that she has been subjected to poor prison conditions and abuse by prison officials.

In 2012, Ta Phong Tan’s mother died after setting herself on fire out of despair at the treatment of her daughter.

On 8 June this year, Amnesty International released a statement calling for Ta Phong Tan’s urgent release.

- **Nguyen Viet Dung**

Mr Nguyen was involved in a peaceful protest with hundreds of Hanoi residents in April this year to protest against the Government’s decision to cut down Hanoi’s centenary trees. He was immediately arrested for wearing the South Vietnam Army uniform.

Police accused him of “disturbing public order” and charged him under article 245 of the Vietnamese penal code.

Following Mr Nguyen’s arrest, police conducted a search of his home and seized many other items associated with the former Republic of Vietnam.

He remains detained in prison with no set date for trial.

- **Viet Khang**

Also known as Vo Minh Tri, is a songwriter, singer and founding member of the Patriotic Youth League in Vietnam.

Viet Khang released two patriotic songs “Anh La Ai” (Who are You?) and “Vietnam Toi Dau” (Where is my beloved Vietnam?) calling the Vietnamese people to stand up to the government’s brutal crackdown on protesters who voiced their opposition to China’s claims over the Paracel and Spratly islands.

He was arrested on 23 December 2011 and detained without trial. On 30 October 2012, Viet Khang was charged with spreading anti-government

propaganda under article 88 of the penal code and sentenced to four years in jail with a further 2 years of probation.

- **Doan Huy Chuong and Nguyen Doan Quoc Hung**

Doan Huy Chung and Nguyen Doan Quoc Hung have been imprisoned since 2010 for distributing leaflets and helping to organise a strike of 10,000 workers at the My Phong Shoe factory in Tra Vinh Province.

They were charged, together with Do Thi Minh Hanh, under article 89 of the penal code for “conducting propaganda against the state”. Nguyen Doan Quoc Hung was sentenced to nine years in prison and Doan Huy Chung and Do Thi Minh Hanh were sentenced to seven.

On 27 June 2014, Do Thi Minh Hanh was released from prison, an unprecedented move by the Vietnamese government. While the exact terms of her release have not been made public, the international community is also urging for the release of Doan Huy Chuong and Nguyen Doan Quoc Hung who, like Do Thi Minh Hanh, have committed no crime other than peacefully standing up for workers rights.

These cases are just a few of the more prominent ones that are of concern to my community, nevertheless demonstrates the level of gross violations of human rights that is being committed in Vietnam.

As Australians, we believe in the protection and promotion of individual human rights which is vital to global efforts to achieve lasting peace, security, freedom and dignity for all. As Australians, we are committed to human rights as a reflection of our national values whereby a person’s liberty and freedoms are respected.

Therefore, given Australia’s role as a principal advocate for human rights in our region, it would be greatly appreciated, if you could, ensure these individual cases are raised when we next participate in the Australian-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Opposition Whip