



**THE HON JULIE BISHOP MP**

---

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Mr Chris Hayes MP  
Chief Opposition Whip  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hayes *Chris*

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2014 regarding Mr Phan Van Thu and Mr Ngo Hoa, and ongoing concerns about the welfare for prisoners in Vietnam.

As you know, the Australian Government holds annual Human Rights Dialogues with Vietnam through which we actively raise concerns on human rights issues including sentencing, prison management and conditions, and torture and brutality. The Government also works to build the capacity of Vietnamese agencies to promote and protect human rights.

At the July 2014 Dialogue, we urged Vietnam to improve prisoner welfare by extending access to health care, allowing families more frequent visiting rights and locating prisoners close to, or within, their home districts. We also expressed concern at the use of national security provisions to restrict peaceful freedom of expression and encouraged Vietnam to strengthen protections for freedoms of association and assembly.

As set out in my letters to you on 20 March and 7 April 2014, Australia made statements on 5 February 2014 at the United Nations, on Vietnam's Universal Periodic Review regarding freedom of expression and non-state media. Vietnam accepted our recommendations and through our Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program we are working with Vietnam to assist implementation.

Vietnam is now a signatory to the *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)* and we are advocating for ratification and implementation. Through our Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program, the Australian Human Rights Commission hosted Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security in November 2014 for a study visit on prisoner rights. It focussed on preparations for ratification of the CAT and sharing best practice on prison management. Australia's advocacy and technical support is having an impact, and I am encouraged that the Vietnamese National Assembly has commenced discussion on ratification.

On the issue of specific cases, Australia considers all available information in assessing whether to include individuals on our cases of concern list.

I can assure you that the Government will continue to monitor the cases of Mr Phan Van Thu and Mr Ngo Hoa and advocate for the humane and dignified treatment of all prisoners.

I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Julie Bishop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Julie" written in a large, looping script and "Bishop" written in a slightly smaller, more compact script.

Julie Bishop  
26 NOV 2014