



Viet Tan (Vietnam Reform Party)

*With members inside Vietnam and around the world,
Viet Tan aims to establish democracy and reform the country through peaceful means.*

www.viettan.org

October 21, 2009

Contact: Duy Hoang

+1 (202) 470-0845

Viet Tan applauds passage of U.S. legislation supporting internet freedom in Vietnam

Following show trials in Vietnam that saw the imprisonment of nine democracy and cyber activists, Viet Tan applauds the passage of H. Res 672, which calls on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release imprisoned bloggers and respect Internet freedom.

With overwhelming bipartisan support, Congress stands with human rights supporters and digital activists who seek to promote freedom of information and expression in Vietnam.

Since 2007, a systemic campaign against free speech by Vietnamese authorities has seen press freedoms curtailed, prominent journalists and bloggers arrested, and an overall crackdown on those who dare to speak out.

Listed on the dishonor roll by the Committee to Protect Journalists as one of the “10 Worst Countries for Bloggers,” Hanoi is known for its repression of political dissent. However, with over 24 million citizens now turning to the Internet, the regime has stepped up its censorship of the web.

Vital to Vietnam’s development, the Internet has the power to transform Vietnamese society, and in many ways it already has. In the absence of an independent media, citizens have turned to the Internet to follow the news and debate national issues. In addition to being a source of information, the Internet is also a potent organizing tool. While Hanoi continues to severely restrict freedom of association, de facto organizations in the form of social networks, discussion forums and issue-specific clubs are active online.

Earlier this month, the Vietnamese authorities sentenced nine democracy activists who used the Internet to organize to a total of 59 years of imprisonment and probation. It is becoming increasingly clear that the walls used by the Hanoi regime to isolate and control the people are increasingly electronic rather than physical.

By passing H. Res 672 today, the U.S. Congress sends a strong message to the Vietnamese Communist Party that arbitrarily stifling essential freedoms of expression and information is unacceptable.

Viet Tan wishes to recognize the leadership of Representative Loretta Sanchez and the 21 Members of Congress who co-sponsored the Vietnam internet freedom resolution. The efforts of the United States government and other democracies are crucial in protecting and advancing free expression.

As part of Viet Tan’s Internet freedom campaign, we will continue working with the international community and activists in Vietnam to:

- Challenge legal statutes restricting freedom of expression
- Urge technology companies not to give into Internet censorship demands
- Support imprisoned bloggers and cyber activists

###