



Viet Tan Update

With a network of members inside Vietnam and around the world, the Vietnam Reform Party (Viet Tan) aims to establish democracy and reform the country through peaceful means.

A Step Forward for Vietnam's Democracy Movement

Vietnamese Citizens Join in Mass Calls for Political Freedom



Living in a police state, the Vietnamese democracy movement has tended to operate underground. Until recently, public calls for political freedom were made by courageous individuals speaking out alone or in very small groups. Collective action was hindered by government restrictions on communication, travel, public meetings—not to mention persecution.

Despite the obstacles, on April 6, 2006 the Vietnamese democracy movement took a step forward when 116 citizens publicly signed an Appeal for Freedom of Political Association. Two days

later, 118 citizens joined together to issue the 2006 Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy for Vietnam. These two documents address the root causes of the country's political stagnation.

The Appeal for Freedom of Political Association lays out the reasons why Vietnamese citizens must seize the initiative: Freedom of association is a basic right enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which Vietnam is a signatory) as well as the constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The reality is that the Vietnamese Communist Party cannot be expected to voluntarily relinquish its monopoly on power over institutions such as the National Assembly, the courts, and the military and security forces. To challenge this monopoly and attain a free political environment Vietnamese citizens must organize political parties that operate openly.

The Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy for Vietnam, also known as the 2006 Manifesto, declares:

“The highest objective in the struggle to fight for freedom and democracy for the Vietnamese nation today is *to make sure that the present political regime in Vietnam be changed in a fundamental way* not through incremental ‘renovation’ steps or, even worse, through insignificant touchups here and there. Concretely speaking, it must be a change from the monistic, one-party, non-competitive regime that we have at the present time to *a pluralistic and multiparty system*, one in which there is healthy competition, in accordance with the legitimate requirements of the nation, including at least *a clear separation of powers between the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of government.*”

The 2006 Manifesto affirms that this struggle must be undertaken by the Vietnamese people themselves though peaceful, non-violent means.

The Vietnamese citizens who signed the Appeal and Manifesto include not only many of the prominent political and religious dissidents who have garnered in-

ternational attention, but also numerous teachers, doctors, and engineers who have been anonymous until now. The signers come from around the country, from Hanoi to Hue to Saigon. To date, hundreds more citizens have signed these two documents.

Like the organizers of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, those behind the Appeal for Freedom of Political Association and the 2006 Manifesto have demonstrated the power of the powerless in Vietnam

by taking the political debate into the public sphere. As more Vietnamese overcome fear and join this growing movement, they will withdraw the power of the regime and return it to the people.

You can support the Vietnamese democracy movement by:

- joining the tens of thousands of people who have signed petitions in support of the 2006 Manifesto, such as:

<http://www.petitiononline.com/UNGHO118/petition.html> (Vietnamese)

<http://www.petitiononline.com/Proj118/petition.html> (English)

- lobbying parliamentarians and other world leaders to support the Appeal for Freedom of Political Association and the 2006 Manifesto.
- defending the courageous signers of the two documents by protesting attempts by the communist authorities to persecute these activists.

**Protest Letter No. 1,
From the 04/08/06 Group of 178 Citizens Advocating for Democracy for Vietnam**

1- April 7, 2006, Public Security of Phu Nhuan District, Saigon came to the residence at 441 Nguyen Kiem Street, Ward 9, Phu Nhuan District, Saigon to seal off the personal computer of engineer Do Nam Hai. Communist authorities suspected him of drafting the 2006 Democracy Manifesto publicized on April 8, 2006 and released for the second time on April 27, 2006.

2- April 25, 2006, from 13:00-15:00, Attorney Nguyen Van Dai, a citizen who also signed the April 8, 2006 Manifesto, was physically abused and detained without cause [by the Public Security] of Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi.

3- April 27, 2006, from 08:00-11:30 and 14:00-16:30 and on April 28, 2006 from 14:00-17:30, engineer Do Nam Hai, a citizen in the 04/08/06 group who signed the Appeal for Freedom of Political Association publicized on April 6, 2006 and released for the second time on April 30, 2006 as well as the April 8, 2006 Manifesto above, was forced to appear before the Public Security of Phu Nhuan, Saigon to answer questions regarding his role in drafting and signing the April 6, 2006 Appeal.

4- April 28, 2006, from 14:00-20:00, pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, a citizen in the 04/08/06 group who also signed the Appeal for Freedom of Political Association publicized on April 6, 2006 and released for the second time on April 30, 2006 as well as the April 8, 2006 Manifesto, was forced to

appear before the Public Security of District 2, Saigon, to answer why pastor Nguyen Hong Quang and his wife, Mrs. Le Thi Phu Dung, signed the April 8, 2006 Manifesto.

In the face of these illegal and illogical actions by the communist government of Vietnam, we on behalf of the 04/08/06 Group of 178 Citizens Advocating for Democracy for Vietnam whose names appear below, declare that:

1- We have in our possession engineer Do Nam Hai's personal computer, which was sealed by the communist government of Vietnam, to use as the historical evidence of the 08/04/06 Group. We have assisted engineer Do Nam Hai to obtain another personal computer in order to continue the struggle.

2- We firmly protest the repression, physical intimidation, and psychological harassment by the communist government of Vietnam against the three citizens above belonging to the 04/08/06 Group. The April 8, 2006 Manifesto is an accurate and constructive document that is much needed for the country and people of Vietnam yearning for freedom and democracy. The act of signing the April 8, 2006 Manifesto is widely supported and respected by Vietnamese in the country and aboard who aspire for freedom and democracy for Vietnam. The acts of summoning and interrogating of the communist government of Vietnam violated, in an illegal and illogical manner, the liberty and personal safety of these

citizens, and only happens in repressive dictatorships that are decried by humanity, swept away years ago, and existing in a few remaining countries in the world including Vietnam. We call on the communist government of Vietnam to respect the principle that even [communist party] general security Nong Duc Manh has recently oft repeated: "The Vietnamese Communist Party always genuinely listens to every differing opinion." [The communist authorities] must therefore restore the honor and lost income of the citizens above because they have had their precious time expropriated by acts that only sully the image of the Vietnamese nation.

3- We protest these acts before international public opinion and request the communist government of Vietnam to cease these types of actions nationwide against any Vietnamese citizen who signs or supports the April 8, 2006 Manifesto. We hereby repeat the Declaration of Resolve of April 22, 2006 by two priests in the 04/08/06 group that if the communist regime arrests or terminates the employment of any one of the 178 Citizens in the 04/08/06 Group or of other Citizens who subsequently join in support, that upon receiving confirmation of such news, Father Tadeo Nguyen Van Ly will go on an indefinite hunger strike to protest this violation of international law by the communist regime. If Father Phan Van Loi is searched, has his means for working confiscated, or is arrested, then he will immediately go on a hunger strike of indefinite duration. These two priests will refuse to sign any interrogation document relating to the above for they view such as

the evil practices of a regime identical to a gang of thieves. We hereby repeat the Urgent Declaration of citizen Hoang Minh Chinh on April 23, 2006 fully supporting the Declaration of Resolve of the two above priests and affirming the 26 fundamental human rights recognized by international law and the United Nations which every member nation must respect and which is the 26 objectives of each Vietnamese person in the struggle to regain these rights.

Vietnam, April 30, 2006

On Behalf of the 04/08/06 Group of 178 Citizens Jointly Proclaiming and Signing Protest Letter No. 1:

1. Representing the Northern region: Professor Hoang Minh Chinh, Hanoi
Attorney Nguyen Van Dai, Hanoi
Writer Hoang Tien, Hanoi
Teacher Nguyen Khac Toan, Hanoi
2. Representing the Central region: Father Phero Nguyen Huu Giai, Hue
Father Phero Phan Van Loi, Hue
Father Tadeo Nguyen Van Ly, Hue
Father Augustino Ho Van Que, Hue
3. Representing the Southern region: Engineer Do Nam Hai, Saigon
Hoa Hao leader Le Quang Liem, Saigon
Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, Saigon
Father Tephano Chan Tin, Saigon

Unsanctioned Newspaper Published in Vietnam



A new bimonthly newspaper called *Tu Do Ngon Luan (Free Expression)* produced its first issue on April 15, 2006. What sets this publication apart from other newspapers in Vietnam is that it is not government run and did not seek a government permit.

Free Expression's publisher is Father Chan Tin, and the editors are Father Nguyen Van Ly and Father Phan Van Loi. The paper is

available online at <http://tudongonluan.atspace.com>.

The following is a translation of the "letter to the reader" that appeared in the first two issues of *Free Expression*.

Dear reader,

The newspaper which you are holding in your hand is extremely humble in appearance due to our



extremely limited material and technical resources. But the aspirations of this newspaper are large: to contribute to the dismantling of the dictatorship and opening toward democracy for the nation.

You and we understand that the freedom and democracy desired by every Vietnamese, that is our birthright as human beings, is foremost the *freedom of information and expression by every means* (speech, writing, images...) *through every form* (mass communication, works of art, research and study...).

The freedom to speak, write, communicate what we see, know—the freedom to openly express our thoughts, faiths, political views—the freedom to receive information from all sources are all guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified in 1966 by the United Nations which Vietnam joined in 1982: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.” (Article 19, section 2). The 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam basically repeats the same: “The citizen shall enjoy freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed...” (Article 69). However in reality, in our Vietnam, under the dictatorial communist regime, our people have never enjoyed these rights, never have been able to publish a private, independent newspaper. Every news item, every perspective, every commentary, every media outlet, every research project has been subject to the control

and permission of the Vietnamese Communist Party with the sole aim of protecting the communist regime. This control was legalized through the 1989 Press Law (amended in 1999) and over 20 legal statutes since then. This restrictive and arbitrary policy on information and expression is foremost a violation of our individual dignity and rights, trampling over the national constitution and international law.

Furthermore, it is the cause of countless calamity and suffering for the people and is pushing the nation toward an impasse.

Free Expression comes into being firstly to affirm and exercise this basic right. We are overcoming the illogical and illegal restrictions of the Vietnamese communist authorities by introducing this newspaper without seeking permission. Secondly, despite our limited capabilities, we aim to provide readers as best as possible accurate information and responsible commentary on the national situation in the hope and belief that “the truth shall set us free.” Free us from the dark cloud blocking out thought, from the Marxist wall blocking the truth and restricting information, from the communist prison detaining hearts and minds, from the chains of fear of a ruling machinery which only knows how to control and intimidate citizens.

The bimonthly *Free Expression* sincerely welcomes all forms of cooperation and support toward the common goal and direction and will not publish any article that espouses violence to further democracy for Vietnam or that engages in malicious slander.

Free Expression desires support from all concerned with the well-being of the nation, especially from those living inside and outside the country wanting to achieve a breakthrough on the road to freedom and democracy which is wrought with thorns and the dictatorial regime is finding all means to block.

You have our deepest appreciation.



contact@viettan.org
www.viettan.org

MAIN OFFICE
2530 Berryessa Rd. #234
San Jose, CA 95132 - USA
(408) 347-8830 phone
(408) 347-8730 fax

ASIA
P.O. Box 223
Shiba, Tokyo 105-91 - JAPAN
(81) 3-3765 5317 phone / fax

EUROPE
BP 130
92185 Antony Cedex - FRANCE
(33) 1.46.86.85.22 phone / fax

AUSTRALIA
P.O. Box 791
Bankstown, NSW 2200
(61) 2 9757-3072 phone / fax