



# Viet Tan Update

## Rallies All Over the World in Supporting Democracy Movements in Vietnam

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

Since the launch of Viet Tan’s Global Campaign to Support Democracy Activists in Vietnam, a series of successful peace rallies have been held around the world. The rallies come in wake of the Vietnam government’s escalated political oppression against Vietnamese pro-democracy activists. Vietnam’s recent crackdown on dissidents came after successfully convincing the international community of its turnaround attitude in human rights and religious freedom, which resulted in being removed from the US State Department’s list of

Countries of Particular Concern regarding religious repression, being granted Permanent Normal Trading Relationship status with the United States and thereby entry into the World Trade Organization. Human Rights Watch has said in a statement the recent arrests of pro-democracy activists Father Nguyen Van Ly and human rights lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan reflect one of the worst crackdowns on human rights in 20 years. *“The government’s ongoing criminalization of peaceful political dissent and violations of basic human rights threatens to*

*undermine its economic achievements.”*

The rallies were held in Paris, Oslo, Canberra, Hamburg, Adelaide, San Francisco, Sacramento, Orange County, Toronto, Tokyo, Perth, San Diego, Munich, Ottawa, The Hague, Hawaii, Chicago, New Orleans, Frankfurt, San Jose, and Washington DC. With numbers reaching the hundreds in various cities, these rallies have been successful in bringing the worlds’ attention to the plight of democracy activists in Vietnam.



San Francisco, USA



Washington DC, USA



Tokyo, Japan



Canberra, Australia



Perth, Australia



Adelaide, Australia



Ottawa, Canada



Munich, Germany



Oslo, Norway



The Hague, Netherlands



Hawaii, USA



San Diego, USA



Little Saigon, USA



Chicago, USA



Paris, France

Father Nguyen Van Ly was arrested on February 18 as part of the Vietnamese government's attack on prominent dissidents. His crime is "carrying out propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" under Article 88 of the Criminal code. Since his arrest Father Ly engaged

in a hunger strike from February 24 to March 5, which has weakened his health. Although, he is not suffering from any serious problems, he still requires a nurse to look after him. Father Ly has since been transferred to the isolated Ben Cui parish building in Phong Xuan, 20km outside of Hue, where

he is guarded by 20 policemen. He is forbidden to leave the building, prohibited from attending mass and cannot receive visits from friends. The Vietnamese Police have launched legal proceedings against Father Ly and if convicted he may face up to 20 years in prison.



Members of the Menomite Church suspected the damage after the police left



Father Nguyen Van Ly's health is rapidly deteriorating



Police reduced the two story Menomite Church into rubble.





Also suffering at the hands of the Vietnamese government is Journalist Nguyen Vu Binh. Nguyen Vu Binh is unjustly serving a prison sentence of 7 years followed by 3 years house arrest. Having already served more than 4 years of his sentence Nguyen Vu Binh's health is rapidly deteriorating. After visiting her husband in prison on February 15, Mrs. Bui Thi Kim Ngan reports that Nguyen Vu Binh had to hop when walking and his back had to bend due to pain; he could not hold up his 5 year old daughter; he felt too tired to talk and had to stop talking at intervals to rest during conversation with his family; he has lost much more weight and his skin colour has changed and darkened. He is also suffering from hypertension and chronic digestive dysfunction, as well as permanent back pain and in the past month chest pain. Nguyen Vu Binh has made several requests for medical checks at the National Cardiology Institute but they have all been refused. He is kept isolated in a small cell in Nam Ha jail and ignored when he calls for help when suffering in pain.

Also arrested in the Vietnamese government's crackdown on democracy activists are human rights attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan. They were taken into custody on March 6 for violating Article 88 under the Criminal code. They both are detained under Article 120 where police are able to detain individuals for up to 4 months without trial pending investigation and in the case of dissidents this period can be extended up to 20 months. State-run Vietnam TV reports that police searched the homes of Dai and Nhan confiscating many documents with the content of propaganda against the state of Vietnam, and many religious documents that were about to be provided to foreign sources'. Dai had previously been detained and interrogated periodically during November 9 to 14, 2006 and placed under house arrest from November 15 to 22, 2006, the period leading up to, during and after the APEC Summit in Hanoi. Dai and other activists were also detained and questioned in February 2007 after hosting Vietnam's first discussion on human rights law. Concerns for the two Lawyers have been raised on an international level with Swedish parliamentarians meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam and Foreign Affairs Minister Pham Gia Khiem to demand for the immediate release of the two as well as all political prisoners.

The Swedish parliamentarians also called for reform of the judicial system, introduction of free press and free expression and the right to peaceful assembly. While in Vietnam, the Swedish parliamentarians had meetings with the wife of Nguyen Van Dai and the mother of Le Thi Cong Nhan. The Swedish parliamentarians were told by Mrs. Nguyen Van Dai that she had been denied visitation rights with her husband and to provide him with necessary medication. She has grave concerns regarding the possibility of her husband being tortured.



**Picture of meeting between Swedish delegation and families of crackdown victims**

These anti-democratic and anti-human rights activities have been occurring despite the landmark January 25 meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in the Vatican. The

Vatican sent delegation to Vietnam on March 5 for a one week visit to negotiate establishing diplomatic ties between the Vatican and Vietnam. This is the 15th round of talks between Vietnam and the Vatican.

Vietnam aims to establish the ties quickly but the Vatican wants several issues resolved first. These issues include: the appointment of bishops for 3 vacant dioceses in Vietnam; the arrest of Father Nguyen Van Ly



for dissident activities; the return of confiscated Vatican property from decades ago; mistreatments of Catholics by local authorities northwest of Vietnam as reported by Vatican news agency; and more education and welfare services allowed for victims of current rapid economic development. The Vatican also wants to change the process in which approval must be granted by the Vietnamese government for the appointment of priests. There are concerns within the Catholic circles in Vietnam that the Vietnamese government's motive for establishing diplomatic relations with the Holy See is purely to increase foreign

investments and to cause tensions between the Catholics and followers of other religions, as well as within the Catholic community.

The recent human right abuses have also come under the scrutiny of the United States. The State Department spokesperson said that Human rights are high on the US agenda, as well as trade and Southeast Asia regional matters for its meeting with the Vietnam Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem. Pham Gia Khiem was in the United States for a six day tour to promote its business ties as well as laying the groundwork for visits by the Vietnamese President

and Prime Minister later this year. It will be the first post war visit to the US by a Vietnamese head of state.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice voiced her concerns regarding the recent crackdown on dissidents during the March 15 meeting. Rice named Nguyen Vu Binh in particular during this meeting and requested his release. It was reported that Pham Gia Khiem was unapologetic about Vietnam's system of government, however, stated that Vietnam will consider the US's request.

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## Oppressive Vietnamese Government

*Excerpt from Federal Member for Mitchell, The Hon Alan Cadman MP press release, March 1, 2007*



**The Hon Alan Cadman**

"It is a matter of deep concern to me and the Australian government that the invasion of human rights continues in Vietnam. In addition, I have reports from the organisa-

tion Persecution about a number of invasions of homes about the detention of people and about the locking up of distance.

"Very deep concern has been expressed on behalf of the Australian Vietnamese community regarding the safety and health of the journalist Nguyen Vu Binh and Rev Fr Nguyen Van Ly.

"The 39 year old journalist, who was arrested by authorities and jailed after an unfair trial in December 2003, has suffered an alarming deterioration in his health. The jailing took place because he dared criticise the Communist regime in articles published on the Internet.

"The priest, Father Nguyen, had his diocese sacked on 18th February

2007 and is under house arrest while other Christians in the area have been jailed, some are on hunger strikes."

Mr. Cadman said the conduct of the Vietnamese government was completely unacceptable. Even the most intolerant regimes had changed including the former Soviet Union, Germany and even China was changing somewhat.

"It is long past the time for Vietnam to enter the free world and change its way completely. It ranks with North Korea in its denial of human rights. The people of Vietnam deserve freedom and justice if they are to receive the full benefits of the modern world."



## Father Nguyen Van Ly

*Excerpt from Members Statement spoken by State Member for Narre Warren North Luke Donnellan MP, March 1, 2007*



**Luke Donnellan MP**

**I**n March 2006 I went to Vietnam specifically to visit political dissidents, one of whom was Fr Nguyen Van Ly in Hue. I have been informed over the past couple of days that Fr Ly was recently arrested by 60 Communist thugs. They went into the Nha Chung building in Hue, took away six computers and some mobile

phones and placed Fr Ly under house arrest.



**Luke Donnellan & Fr Ly (Right)**

They have not placed him in jail this time, as they usually do. He is on a hunger strike.

What disappoints me more than anything else about this is the Vietnamese Prime Minister recently visited the Vatican. I

understand that the Vietnamese Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, told His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI that Vietnam was free and tolerant and respected the religious and democratic rights of its people. It is plainly obvious it does not.

It is plainly obvious Vietnam does not like dissent. Fr Ly is one of the highest profile dissidents in the country. All he is calling for is basic religious and democratic freedom. He, along with Fr Loi, has been writing an underground paper for many years. He has now been arrested, after spending 10 years of his life in jail under this thuggish Vietnamese region.

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## *Congressman Royce Calls for Renewed Focus on Vietnamese Human Rights*

*Excerpt from U.S. Representative, Congressman Ed Royce press release, March 14, 2007*



**Congressman Ed Royce**

**O**n the eve of the Vietnamese Foreign Minister's visit to the United States, Congressman Ed

Royce gave the following statement at a press conference calling for greater human rights in Vietnam:

Religious oppression in Vietnam is systematic. The newly-released State Department "Annual Report on Human Rights" cites numerous instances of physical torture, arbitrary arrest, and detainment of those practicing all religions. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam has had members harassed and been prevented from conducting independent religious activi-

ties outside of their pagodas. Senior leaders for the UBCV have been confined to their pagodas since 2003, and have restrictions on their ability to travel and meet with followers.

When I visited Vietnam and met with dissident Thich Quang Do, I saw first-hand the Communist Party's harassment of those Vietnamese citizens who decide to peacefully set forth dissenting political and religious views. Religious oppression has continued. On January 30th, five days after



Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visited the Vatican's Holy See, the Communist authorities of the Ninh Binh Province sent officials to the Phat Diem Diocese to demolish an outdoor Pieta statue. In another instance, on February 19th, 2007, hundreds of Thua Thien provincial security agents blockaded the Hue Archdiocese Compound. They brutally forced him out of the archdiocesan compound and placed him under house arrest far from the City of Hue. Father Ly remained on a hunger strike until the beginning of March until his health began to rapidly deteriorate.

In addition to these appalling actions against those members of the religious faith, the Vietnamese government is making a wide-

spread attempt to curb peaceful democracy protests, especially in the past few weeks. Numerous Vietnamese democracy activists have suffered harassment, detainment, and government surveillance. According to human rights groups, attorneys Le Thi Cong Nhan and the only practicing attorney in Vietnam specializing in human rights, Nguyen Van Dai, were arrested and had their licenses revoked for leading group discussion on democracy.

The suffering of the Vietnamese people remains a pressing concern for America. Vietnam's continued suppression of political dissidents is intolerable if U.S.-Vietnam relations are to advance.



**Congressman Ed Royce speech**

Today, Congressman Royce joined Congressman Chris Smith (NJ) as an original co-author of a House Resolution Calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Li Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

## 110TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION H. RES.

*Excerpt from U.S. Representative, Congressman Chris Smith Resolution, March 13, 2007*

**C**alling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Li Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and for other purposes.



**Congressman Chris Smith**

### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on





## RESOLUTION

Calling on the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Li Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and for other purposes.

Whereas, on February 18, 2007, Vietnamese police raided the parish house of Father Nguyen Van Ly and confiscated computers, telephones, more than 100 mobile phone cards, and more than 200 kilograms of documents;

Whereas the police moved Father Ly to the remote location of Ben Cui in central Vietnam, where he is under house arrest;

Whereas Father Ly is a former prisoner of conscience, having spent a total of over 13 years in prison since 1983 for his advocacy of religious freedom and democracy in Vietnam;

Whereas Father Ly is one of the founders of “Block 8406”, a democracy movement that started in April 2006 when hundreds of people throughout Vietnam signed public petitions calling for democracy and human rights;

Whereas Father Ly is also a founder of a new political party, the Vietnam Progression Party, and one of the primary editors of “Freedom of Speech” magazine;

Whereas, on March 6, 2007, Vietnamese police arrested one of Vietnam’s few practicing human

rights lawyers, Nguyen Van Dai, who has defended individuals arrested for their human rights and religious activities, is the co-founder of the Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam, and is one of the principle organizers of the Block 8406 democracy movement;

Whereas, on March 6, 2007, Vietnamese police also arrested Le Thi Cong Nhan, a human rights lawyer, a member of “Block 8406”, the principle spokesperson for the Progression Party, and a founder of the Vietnamese Labor Movement;

Whereas Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan have been charged with disseminating propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam under article 88 of the Penal Code;

Whereas if convicted, they each could be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison;

Whereas in none of their activities have Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, or Li Thi Cong Nhan advocated or engaged in violence in their opposition to the Vietnamese Government or its policies;

Whereas the arrest of and charges against Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan violate Article 69 of the Vietnamese Constitution, which states that

“The citizen shall enjoy freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, the right to be informed and the right to assemble, form

associations and hold demonstrations in accordance with the provisions of the law”;

Whereas Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan have been arrested and charged in contravention of the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Vietnam is a state party, specifically Article 18 (freedom of religion), Article 19 (freedom of expression) and Article 22 (freedom of association);

Whereas the United State Congress agreed to Vietnam becoming an official member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006, amidst assurances that the Vietnamese Government was steadily improving its human rights record and would continue to do so;

Whereas the group of Asian countries at the United Nations have nominated Vietnam as the sole regional candidate for a nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2008-2009 biennium, and pursuant to the

United Nations Charter, Vietnam would be required to discharge its duties in accordance with the purposes of the United Nations, including the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all; and

Whereas the arbitrary imprisonment and the violation of the human rights of citizens of Vietnam



are sources of continuing, grave concern to Congress, and the arrests of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan are part of a trend toward increasing oppression of human rights advocates in Vietnam: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That—*

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) condemns and deplors the arbitrary arrests of Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and calls for their immediate and unconditional release and the dropping of all criminal charges, and for the immediate and unconditional release of all other political and religious prisoners;

(B) condemns and deplors the violations of the freedoms of speech, religion, movement, association, and the lack of due process afforded to individuals in Vietnam;

(C) challenges the qualifications of Vietnam to be a member of the United Nations Security Council, unless the Government of Vietnam begins immediately to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all within its own borders; and

(D) strongly urges the Government of Vietnam to consider the implications of its actions for the

broader relationship between the United States and Vietnam; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should—

(A) make a top concern the immediate release, legal status, and humanitarian needs of Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan;

(B) use funds from the newly created Human Rights Defenders Fund of the Department of State to assist with the legal defense and the needs of the families and dependents of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, and Li Thi Cong Nhan;

(C) continue to urge the Government of Vietnam to comply with internationally recognized standards for basic freedoms and human rights;

(D) make clear to the Government of Vietnam that it must adhere to the rule of law and respect the freedom of religion and expression in order to broaden its relations with the United States;

(E) make clear to the Government of Vietnam that the detention of Father Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Li Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and other human rights violations are not in the interest of Vietnam because they create obstacles to improved bilateral relations and cooperation with

8 the United States;

(F) if there is widespread harassment, short-term detentions, long-term house detentions, and arrests

of religious leaders and religious-motivated rights defenders and activists, re-impose on Vietnam the country of particular concern (CPC) designation, which was removed on November, 13, 2006, for severe and ongoing violations of the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, and belief in Vietnam;

(G) make clear to the Government of Vietnam that the norms and responsibilities of joining the international community are not fully realized in Vietnam's WTO membership, and that the issues of the freedoms of speech, assembly, association, and the right of due process are essential for a healthy trade and business climate; and

(H) in order to advance these freedoms and rights, and to strengthen the long-term relationship between the United States and Vietnam, initiate new foreign assistance programs to advance the capacity and networking abilities of Vietnamese civil society, including new rule of law programs to train Vietnamese human rights lawyers, judges, academics, and students about international human rights law; new public diplomacy initiatives to inform and teach Vietnamese citizens about international human rights norms and responsibilities, and projects that support organizations and associations that promote the freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and association.





## The Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam Declaration

Whereas, in recent days the Vietnamese communist government has intensified its campaign to crack down on political dissidents and democracy and human rights advocates by blatantly raiding on Father Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly's quarters in the Hue City Rectory during the traditional celebration of the Lunar New Year of the Boar (2007). Whereas, the Vietnamese communist government has continued to redouble its efforts, resorting to proletarian dictatorship violence against young democracy and human rights activists in Vietnam, witness:

For over a month now, the communist government has frenziedly employed various tactics to repress democracy activists in Vietnam, beginning with its illegal raid on the Thien An law office on February 3, 2007, while attorney Le Thi Cong-Nhan was providing a group of college students with information on human rights. On the evening of the same day, security police conducted a search of the office and took away personal items and documents belonging to attorney Nguyen Van Dai. On the afternoon of February 4, the police proceeded with searching the homes of both attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong-Nhan, and confiscated more of their personal items and materials. In the following days, they continued to interrogate the attorneys. On February 10, under pressure from the police the Discipline and Commendation Board of the Hanoi Lawyers

Association asked attorney Dai to report for a hearing, but Mr. Dai declined because of a previously arranged doctor's appointment. The police also pressured the Office of Business Registrar of Hanoi's Planning and Investment Bureau to issue a notice to cancel its license to the Translation and Legal Consultation, LLP on February 28, 2007, of which Mr. Nguyen Van Dai is a co-founder and the executive director. On March 1st, the Discipline and Commendation Board of the Hanoi Lawyers Association sent another notice requesting Mr. Dai to report for a hearing on March 12.

Father Nguyen Van Ly, 60, a co-founder of Bloc 8406 and mentor of the Vietnam Progression Party, was arrested in Hue by a 60 policemen-strong force at 3 p.m. on February 24, 2007 after they had confined him to a tiny room inside the Hue Archdiocese Rectory at 69 Phan Dinh Phung Street. On February 18, as the police stormed into his room, ransacked his furniture and belongings, and confiscated his personal computers and mobile phones, Father Ly went on a hunger strike until today (March 6, 2007) in order to protest peacefully the violent and barbaric tactics the communist government has employed to muzzle political dissent. His health has deteriorated as his blood pressure is dropping and his speech is weak. Father Ly protested vigorously when five to six muscular policemen locked his arms and forcibly escorted him away.

On March 6, at 10 a.m. (Hanoi time) a group of 15 police stormed

into the home of attorney Le Thi Cong-Nhan in a communal housing compound for government employees at 316, A7, Alley 4, Phuong Mai, Dong Da precinct, Hanoi. Mr. Ngo Quang Du, the police team leader of Hanoi's Police Headquarters, read to Ms. Cong-Nhan a warrant ordering her to be detained for at least four months pending investigation, as stipulated by Article 88 of the Criminal Code. A few moments later, the news came that secret service agents tailing attorney Nguyen Van Dai on the way to his office had turned him back, forcing him to join their search of his home (Apartment 302-Z8, Back Khoa Communal House, Back Khoa ward, Hai Ba Trung precinct, Hanoi) and the Thien An law office (10 Doan Tran Nghiep, Bui Thi Xuan ward, Hai Ba Trung precinct, Hanoi). The police took away from the law office a total of five desk computers costing eight million Vietnamese dong apiece. On the second ransack, communist police did greater damage to the law office than on the first time on February 3. At Mr. Dai's home, after having confiscated his mobile phone, police read to him the same warrant as they did to Ms. Cong Nhan. They flatly refused the plea of his wife, Vu Minh Khanh, for a receipt of confiscated items. Both arrests were videotaped by police, who then fed footage directly to the evening news broadcast on the same day on VTV1, a State-owned television station, which contained libelous charges against both attorneys.



In view of the above incidents, we strongly believe that the current campaign is aimed at violently repressing political dissidents and persons of conscience in Vietnam. The government's acts are in serious violation of the Vietnamese Constitution with regard to Articles 68 (freedom of movement,) 71 (inviolability of the citizen's body,) and 73 (inviolability of the citizen's domicile). Furthermore, the communist government has violated Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Criminal Code, and in particular Article 145 that concerns receipts of confiscated items. They are also in serious violation of Articles 9, 12 and 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the UN to which Vietnam became a signatory member on September 24, 1982.

The Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam hereby declares:

1/ That it condemns the Vietnamese communist government for having employed repressive tactics from arrest to seizure of personal properties when raiding the Thien An law office, as well as the headquarters of Bloc 8406 and the Vietnam Progression Party.

2/ That it vigorously denounces the Vietnamese communist government for having detained attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong-Nhan.

3/ That it urges the communist government to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, and attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan, at once stop all measures of harassment and repression against the democracy movement, namely the Thien An law office, the Vietnam Progression Party, and Bloc 8406.

4/ That it calls upon the international community of civilized, progressive, peace-loving people around the world to voice their unanimous support of the two attorneys, as well as other people of conscience in Vietnam.

5/ That it calls upon all governments, international human rights advocacy organizations, as well as the people, including overseas Vietnamese, all over the world, to strongly condemn the Vietnamese communist government for having arrested attorneys Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong-Nhan.

**Made in Hanoi on this 7th day of March, 2007**

**On behalf of the Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam**

**Nguyen Cong Ly and Bui Minh Thanh**

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## Release Political Prisoners in Vietnam!

*Excerpt from press release by Member of Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Vice President Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, Goran Lindblad on behalf of the Swedish Parliament, March 9, 2007*



Two known dissidents, both lawyers faced sudden arrest two days ago. The Vietnamese governments' arrest of two oppositional

lawyers, Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan, is receiving attention by Swedish parliamentarians presently in Hanoi. The Swedish group of parliamentarians has

spoken to the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam, Pham Gia Khiem, who is also the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the day, demanding the immediate release of the two as well as all political prisoners. Demands for a reform



of the judicial system, introduction of a free press and free expression, and the right to assembly were made as well. The group has also met with the wife of one of the lawyers as well as the mother of the other one. Furthermore, there has been telephone contact with additional dissidents in Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City. The two lawyers were arrested in Hanoi this Tuesday for “propaganda against” the nation’s communist government.

The wife of Nguyen Van Dai has been denied meeting her husband

and providing him with necessary medication in remand prison. She is also worried about the risk of torture.

By urgent request of the relatives we now demand guarantees that the arrested will be set free, and that they are not tortured, even though Vietnam has not ratified the UN Convention against torture.

We are deeply concerned about the malfunctioning judicial system. For example the lack of right to an attorney and the right to

full access in advance to all evidence concerning the case. Vietnam must live up to United Nations standards on Human Rights if they aspire to become a member of the Security Council 2008.

According to the Millennium Declaration Vietnam has a lot to accomplish in the field of democracy and human rights.



### Therese Jebsen of Rafto Foundation and interpreter Kieu Tran was arrested whilst visiting Thich Quang Do, 2006 Rafto Prize Laureate, in Saigon

Excerpt from press release by Rafto Foundation: For Immediate Release, Bergen, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007

*“This arrest makes me ashamed and humiliated for my country and people”, says Thich Quang Do*

At 9.00 (Vietnam time) this morning, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March, Ms **Therese Jebsen**, **Rafto Foundation** and interpreter Ms **Kieu Tran** was arrested as they came to visit Venerable **Thich Quang Do**, Deputy leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) at the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon where he is under house arrest.



**Venerable Thich Quang Do**

As they stepped inside the Monastery’s courtyard, five Security officials, one wearing Police uniform, the others in plain clothing arrived immediately and arrested them. Thich Quang Do protested they were breaking Vietnam’s traditional culture of hospitality, and insisted that Police let him talk with Ms Jebsen. But they refused, and took her away in the Police car immediately with the other two people. They said they were taking them to the Police Station in the 15<sup>th</sup> Ward (Phu Nhuan).

Ms. Therese Jebsen and Ms. Kieu Tran were later released. The latest news received from Ms. Jebsen is that she is fine. However, Ms. Tran has been asked to come back to the Police station later today. The Rafto Foundation is concerned about her security. Ms. Kieu Tran is a Norwegian citizen. She assisted Ms. Jebsen as an interpreter in Vietnam.

The Rafto Foundation has contacted Norway’s ambassador to Vietnam. The embassy is informed about the situation and is engaged in the case. They are also concerned about the security of Ms. Kieu Tran.

The Rafto Foundation awarded the 2006 Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize



**Ms Therese Jebsen**





to Venerable Thich Quang Do. Thich Quang Do was not allowed to travel to Norway to receive the prize last November.

Mr. Arne Liljedahl Lynngård, Chairman of the Rafto Foundation asked to visit Vietnam in February to hand Thich Quang Do the Rafto-diploma in person and meet the Vietnamese government in a spirit of dialogue.



Ms Kieu Tran



Chairman of the Rafto Mr. Arne Liljedahl Lynngård,

The Vietnamese government refused, stating that Mr. Lynngård was not welcome in Vietnam. Just

last week, Norwegian diplomats raised the issue again with the Vietnamese authorities in Hanoi, but Vietnam refused to change its position.

Announcing the incident by telephone to Unified Buddhist church of Vietnam (UBCV) spokesman Vo Van Ai this morning, Venerable Thich Quang Do said:

*“The arrest of Therese Jebsen makes me ashamed for my country and my people. Under the Communist regime, 80 million Vietnamese people suffer such humiliations and harassments every day. Now Hanoi subjects foreign visitors to the same insufferable treatment. I am shocked, outraged and deeply ashamed for the people of Vietnam”.*

Updates on the case will be published at our website [www.rafto.no](http://www.rafto.no)

For any other information please contact

Mr. Arne Liljedahl Lynngård, chairman of the Rafto Foundation [Arne@bts.no](mailto:Arne@bts.no) or phone +47 95 15 22 90

OR Secretariat at the Rafto Foundation [secretariat@rafto.no](mailto:secretariat@rafto.no) or phone +47 55 21 09 50 / +47 90 67 36 78

**[contact@viettan.org](mailto:contact@viettan.org)**  
**[www.viettan.org](http://www.viettan.org)**

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

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