Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2010

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We write to you as you prepare to travel to Vietnam next week to participate in the ASEAN Regional Forum, and request that you raise the issue of Vietnam's human rights abuses at the highest levels.

Vietnam's recent crackdown on human rights - ranging from freedom of speech to freedom of religion - raises significant concerns. The case of imprisoned writer and democracy advocate Tran Khai Thanh Thuy is telling. Many in Congress have spoken over the phone with Ms. Thuy about the worsening human rights situation. Recently, having done nothing more than peacefully advocate for social justice, Ms. Thuy was followed home by plainclothes Vietnamese police officers last February and beaten over the head with a brick. In a gross miscarriage of justice, Vietnamese authorities charged Ms. Thuy with assault, and sentenced her to three and a half years imprisonment. Such is the fate of many who speak out on the issue of Vietnamese human rights, such as Pham Thanh Nghien and Le Cong Dinh, whose release is of paramount importance.

Another issue of serious concern remains the Vietnamese government's crackdown on religious organizations that choose to practice outside the state's rigid controls. On May 20, 2010, Vietnamese security forces arrested ten Degar Christians from Plei Kret Krot after refusing to sign a document renouncing their religion. Many of these peaceful practitioners were beaten with batons, others were stabbed. Such behavior demands that Vietnam be relisted as a "Country of Particular Concern" for religious freedom.

As you may know, H.R.2410, the State Department Authorization bill, passed the full House of Representatives this year and included a resolution offered by Rep. Ed Royce calling on Vietnam to be relisted as a CPC. Since 1999, the U.S. State Department has designated countries that "engage in or tolerate particularly severe violations of religious freedom," as Countries of Particular Concern. The inclusion of Vietnam on this important list would not only send a message to the Vietnamese government that such abuses will not be tolerated, but would also provide additional tools to leverage for greater human rights in Vietnam.

Again, we urge you to raise these human rights violations with top Vietnamese officials during your upcoming trip to Vietnam, address putting Vietnam back on the CPC list as called for in the House passed legislation, and press for the release of Ms. Thuy, Ms. Nghien, and Mr. Dinh along with other prisoners of conscience. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Ed Royce
EDWARD R. ROYCE

ANH "JOSEPH" CAO

DANA ROHRABACHER

FRANK WOLF

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