

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 31, 2011

Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland  
Chairman  
Nobel Prize Committee  
Henrik Ibsens Gate 51  
NO-0255 Oslo  
Norway

Dear Mr. Prime Minister and Members of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee:

Many in the global human rights community were greatly encouraged by the Nobel Committee's decision to award Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize last year. Not only did this serve to shine a bright light on China's egregious human rights abuses, but it assured dissidents and activists the world over who face increasing pressure at the hands of the repressive regimes that they have not been forgotten, that their voices have not been silenced.

Sadly, Dr. Liu represents thousands of peaceful dissidents who remain languishing in prison or under house arrest, among them, Dr. Nguyen Dan Que of Vietnam, who we nominate for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

Despite nearly 30 years of imprisonment, torture, abuse, harassment and house arrest, Dr. Que remains unbowed. In 2005, nearly two months after his last release from prison, he was interviewed by Voice of America (VOA). During the interview he issued his nine-point road map to democracy in Vietnam. This road map is consistent with his life-long aspiration for a peaceful path to Vietnamese democracy and universal human rights in the country he loves.

In the last year alone he has been extremely active in continuing to pursue this aim. In August 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the East Asia summit in Hanoi. Dr. Que and more than 90 Vietnamese citizens, mostly prominent dissidents, sent her a letter urging that she intervene with Vietnamese government authorities and seek the release of two bloggers, Dieu Cay and Anh Ba Saigon. They also urged her to press for greater Internet freedom.

Dr. Que's rallying cry among the Vietnamese dissident community didn't stop there. On December 10, 2010, the 62nd Anniversary of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, he and more than 200 prominent dissidents signed the Declaration of Vietnamese Patriots which condemned the violations of human rights by the Vietnamese Communist regime and demanded that the Vietnamese government respect basic human rights, accept a multi-party system, and return to the Vietnamese people the right to choose their own form of government through free and fair election.

These latest actions shouldn't come as a surprise considering Dr. Que's long history as a courageous advocate for his people. His tireless efforts to peacefully advance freedom and democracy in Vietnam have resulted in great personal hardship for nearly half of his life.

Dr. Que was born in Hanoi in 1942. His father, an anti-French nationalist who also was anti-communist, was assassinated in 1945. Shortly thereafter, the family fled to South Vietnam, where Que studied medicine and graduated from the Saigon Medical School at the age of 24. He was awarded scholarship by the World Health Organization to further his studies abroad. In 1974, he returned to Vietnam and taught at the Saigon Medical School. Dr. Que refused to leave Vietnam with the rest of his family following the communist takeover of Saigon. Rather, he decided to stay and help rebuild his country after decades of war. He established a successful medical practice in Ho Chi Minh City and was outspoken on behalf of those who had no voice challenging the government's practice of selectively treating communist party members while neglecting the health needs of the poor. His advocacy resulted in his removal as director of the Medical Department of Cho Ray Hospital. This was one of many injustices he would endure.

In 1976, he joined forces with some friends who shared his frustration at the lack of basic human rights in Vietnam and founded the non-violent National Progressive Front. The communist government was threatened by the movement's rapid growth and in February 1978, Dr. Que was arrested along with nearly 50 fellow activists. He was detained for 10 years without formal charges or a trial, beaten, tortured and placed in solitary confinement. He spent two months in a five-foot-by-six-foot cell without sanitary facilities. Respected non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch pressed for his release. It was finally granted in 1988, but his health had deteriorated considerably.

Dr. Que was not silenced by this horrific experience. On May 11, 1990, Dr. Que founded the Non-Violent Movement for Human Rights, issuing a manifesto that appealed to individuals and groups inside Vietnam and throughout the world for support of his non-violent struggle to demand that the government of Vietnam respect basic human rights, accept the multiparty system and return to the Vietnamese people the right to choose their own form of government according to their will through free and fair elections. He was arrested one month later in June 1990, and again tortured and imprisoned without a trial. In November 1991, Dr. Que was brought to trial on charges of trying to overthrow the government. Despite vocal opposition by the U.S. Congress, Dr. Que faced a brief trial, without witnesses or legal representation, and was ultimately sentenced to 20 years of hard labor and five years of house arrest.

Dr. Que's quest for freedom for his people, and the persecution he has suffered as a result have inspired men and women around the world to speak out on his behalf. Among them, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights presented Dr. Que with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award. In their words, he has "dedicated his life to promoting greater freedom of expression and human rights in Vietnam." Dr. Torsten Wiesel, a Nobel laureate in medicine and a human rights advocate, has said this of Dr. Que: "His stature, to me, is very much like that of [the late] Dr. [Andrei] Sakharov, the famous Russian dissident, because of his insistence on human rights -- his courage."

Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland

January 31, 2011

Page 3

In August 1998, Dr. Que was again released from prison by the Vietnamese Government. His health had deteriorated but his resolve was unwavering. Despite the known risks, and the fact that he endures constant surveillance and harassment by the authorities, Dr. Que has chosen to stay in Vietnam to continue his non-violent struggle for democracy, peace, and the fundamental rights of the individual. In March 2003, just days after he criticized the communist government for its suppression of free speech and freedom of information, Dr. Que was arrested for the third time. He was placed in strict incommunicado, and charged with espionage. In July 2004 Dr. Que was brought to trial and was sentenced to two and half years prompting strong criticism from the international community including the United Nations. In November 2004 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared that Dr. Que had been wrongly detained and should be released.

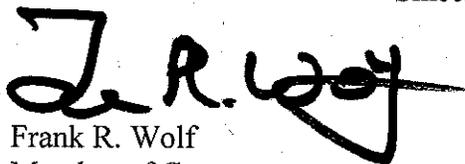
Again, facing intense international pressure, the Vietnamese government released Dr. Que from prison in February 2005 and placed him under "house arrest" for five years. While the Government of Vietnam did not officially renew or extend his house arrest term he is far from being a free man. He is under close surveillance by Vietnamese security forces—living under virtual house arrest.

Despite years of hardship and persecution, Dr. Que has continued to advocate for the unity of all Vietnamese people. Many of his fellow countrymen have written articles, songs and poems and produced movies praising his courage and his dedication to human rights and democracy in Vietnam.

Dr. Que, like Dr. Liu, represents thousands of brave dissidents, living under repressive governments the world over. These brave men and women peacefully and courageously advocate for the basic freedoms and liberties that are their birthright. Dr. Que embodies the ideals of the Nobel Peace Prize. We urge the Committee to recognize his life's work.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

  
Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress

  
Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

  
Edward R. Royce  
Member of Congress