



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 16, 2021

Vice President Kamala Harris
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Harris,

On the occasion of your historic trip as the first U.S. Vice President to visit Vietnam, we believe that it is essential that you bring attention to the issue of deteriorating human rights in Vietnam. In addition, it is crucial that you raise the issue of COVID-19 and American citizens in the country to the government of Vietnam.

During this global pandemic, it is critical that the international community work together to combat this deadly virus. We are pleased that the administration donated 5 million doses of the Moderna vaccine to Vietnam. Although the Vietnamese government has announced that there will be no discrimination between Vietnamese citizens and foreigners, only specific priority groups currently have access to the vaccine.

We understand that it is the administration's policy not to tell countries how to distribute the vaccine. However, there are more than 100,000 U.S. citizens living and working in Vietnam, and we urge you to consider the responsibility of the United States to our citizens abroad and allow the U.S. embassy and consulate in Vietnam to provide COVID-19 vaccines to U.S. citizens immediately. This effort would protect Americans without having to jump ahead on the waitlist and allow the Vietnamese government to comfortably vaccinate their citizens on their own schedule.

Amidst the pandemic, we are also deeply concerned about the serious human rights violations and the increased crackdown on peaceful dissidents in Vietnam, against independent journalists, faith leaders, religious minorities, human rights defenders, and activists who exercised their freedom of speech, press and association as guaranteed by the Vietnamese Constitution. The Vietnamese authorities even arrest its own citizens for criticizing the government's COVID-19 response and policies – most recently with the arrest of 33 years old Trần Hoàng Huân for using his Facebook account to call on the government to provide electricity and water bills relief to citizens during the pandemic and criticize country's vaccine distribution policy. In another case,

a university lecturer, Trần Thị Thơ of the Duy Tan University in the central Vietnam was fired after a student posted on Facebook a video of the lecturer arguing with the student about the lack of government relief for those impacted by the pandemic. We firmly believe that the goal of a free and stable Asia-Pacific region cannot be realized while human rights abuses are rampant.

We are particularly concerned with the high number of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. In recent years, the government of Vietnam has increased its crackdown on dissidents, including independent journalists, using arbitrary national security laws. The government has handed out extremely harsh and long prison sentences to peaceful dissidents whose only crime was exercising their rights. Some of the activists were independent journalists and contributors of Radio Free Asia. In particular, we are gravely concerned about the continued imprisonment of activist Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, blogger/journalist Phạm Đoan Trang, journalist and RFA contributor Trương Duy Nhất, activist Lê Đình Lượng, journalist Lê Hữu Minh Tuấn, journalist/RFA reporter Nguyễn Văn Hóa, legal expert and human rights activist Nguyễn Bắc Truyển, and Australian human rights activist Châu Văn Khảm. We are concerned about their health conditions and their ability to access COVID vaccines in prison. We request you to bring these cases up in your meeting with Vietnamese officials, request that they be given vaccines, and demand for their release. We believe that increasing bilateral ties between the United States and Vietnam is conditioned upon the improvement of human rights in that one-party state.

In conclusion, we hope the administration will prioritize the safety of Americans abroad immediately, as well as stand up for basic human rights of the Vietnamese people while discussing bilateral ties with Vietnam. We look forward to positive outcomes on these issues on your trip and working with you on these important matters.

Respectfully,



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



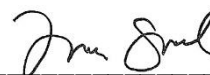
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