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17TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States
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April 5, 2018

Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
1 Bach Thao
Hanoi, Vietnam

Dear Prime Minister,

As the representative from California's 17th Congressional District (Silicon Valley), which is home to tens of thousands of Vietnamese Americans, and as a member of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, I urge you to drop the charges against the six prisoners of conscience that will face trial today in Hanoi City. When making this decision, please take into consideration the international impact this trial will have on your country.

There are many opportunities for our two nations to collaborate. Whether economically or militarily, I hope to strengthen our relationship over the coming years and work together where interests overlap.

That being said, I have serious concerns and find it unacceptable that, according to Amnesty International, almost 100 prisoners of conscience in your country are held against their will, tortured, and ill-treated. These prisoners are simply lawyers, bloggers, religious leaders and human rights activists, held in prison for peacefully voicing their opinions. While they might criticize the government, these six prisoners of conscience have not committed any violent actions and do not pose any harm to Vietnamese society. Please release them before their trial. The international community is watching and deeply concerned.

I recognize we have different political systems and do not aim to impose our values on your society. However, I must speak out when basic human and political rights are violated. In the United States, political discord, criticism of the government, and peaceful protests have only made us stronger as a nation. We hope you see the benefits of healthy discord and a vibrant civil society.

My grandfather risked his life by non-violently protesting in Gandhi's independence movement in India. He spent years in jail as a prisoner of conscience for writing unpopular political views in a newspaper. This issue is thus personal to me, and to my district. In many cases, the prisoners

are the brother, sister, or friends of someone living in my district. I join my constituents in their call for political justice and human rights in Vietnam.

I also join the call made by the United States Department of State on February 6, 2018, in which they “called on Vietnam to release all prisoners of conscience immediately, and to allow all individuals in Vietnam to express their views freely and assemble peacefully without fear of retribution.” Please, intervene to stop the trial and end all laws banning non-violent political dissent.

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Khanna', is positioned above the printed name.

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress