

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 5, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We write today to respectfully request that you take a meaningful step to help advance religious freedom and related human rights in Vietnam by re-designating Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998*. It is encouraging that the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi has publicly condemned recent arrests, detentions, and acts of violence that “contradict Vietnam’s own commitment to internationally accepted standards of human rights and the rule of law.” Unfortunately, Vietnam’s oppression of its citizens, particularly over the last year, continues to demonstrate that public statements of concern are simply not enough.

We believe that the CPC designation is a powerful and effective tool to both spotlight abuses of religious freedom and to encourage specific improvement. Vietnam’s previous designation as a CPC did not hinder advancement on other bilateral interests, but rather led to real improvements on a number of critical human rights concerns. In addition, protecting and promoting religious freedom is a core American value and essential to the success of many of our global interests.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Human Rights Watch, and other organizations have provided credible evidence of severe and ongoing religious freedom violations in Vietnam, including the active suppression of independent religious activity, forced renunciations of faith, the expulsion of monks and nuns, and the effective disbandment of the order associated with the renowned Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, as well as the jailing of religious freedom activists and human rights attorneys Le Cong Dinh and Nguyen Van Dei.

Additionally, the imprisonment of hundreds of Montagnard Christians and the ongoing arrests and harsh repression of Montagnards belonging to independent house churches is another indication that pressure must be brought to bear on the Vietnamese government. Religious freedom violations should dictate a more concerted US diplomatic response to Vietnam’s disregard for this basic human right.

We cannot allow Vietnam’s continued backsliding on human rights and related rule of law issues to continue with minimal reaction from the United States. Working to guarantee

internationally recognized freedoms is in the interest of the American people, the Vietnamese people and the future success of U.S.-Vietnam relations.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

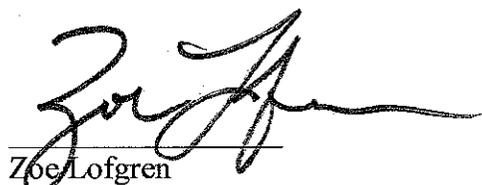
Sincerely,



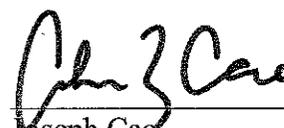
Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



Chris Smith
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



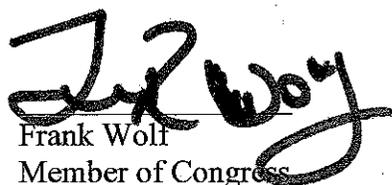
Joseph Cao
Member of Congress



Edward Royce
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Dan Burton
Member of Congress



Frank Wolf
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Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress