



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ms. Lofgren:

Thank you for your letter of August 6 regarding Vietnam's human rights record and the detention of Dr. Richard Nguyen (Nguyen Quoc Quan). Secretary Clinton has asked me to respond on her behalf.

We share your concerns about the poor human rights conditions in Vietnam. During Secretary Clinton's meeting with Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in Hanoi on July 10, she urged Vietnam to release political prisoners, respect religious freedom, and allow Vietnamese citizens to peacefully express their political views, both online and elsewhere. We have been clear with Vietnamese leaders that the American people will not support broad advances in political and economic relations between our countries without demonstrable progress on human rights.

Ambassador Shear and the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi have taken a number of steps in seeking the Government of Vietnam to quickly and transparently resolve the case of Dr. Richard Nguyen, and we raised his case in the context of the Secretary's latest visit. Soon after learning of Dr. Nguyen's detention, our Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City began making regular contact with Mrs. Mai Huong Ngo, the wife of Dr. Nguyen. U.S. diplomats continue to meet with Dr. Nguyen in prison to monitor his condition and provide our full consular assistance.

I am enclosing with this letter a fact sheet detailing Ambassador Shear's actions and our Mission's efforts to advance human rights in Vietnam. We hope this information is useful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kurt M. Campbell".

Kurt M. Campbell
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Enclosure

As stated.

U.S. Mission in Vietnam

Promoting Human Rights, Religious Freedom, and Democracy

Led by Ambassador David Shear, the U.S. Mission in Vietnam is dedicated to improving human rights at all levels in meetings with officials of the Government of Vietnam and regular exchanges with prominent human rights activists and religious officials. Our outreach to activists continues despite regular objections by the Government of Vietnam. We have repeatedly told Vietnamese government leaders that the American people will not support broad advances in political and economic relations between the United States and Vietnam without demonstrable progress in human rights and religious freedom. We have bolstered this message by stating specifically that we want progress in the release of political prisoners; increased political and civil rights, including freedom of expression through the internet; and expanded religious freedom. Listed below are specific activities of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam.

Promoting the Welfare of U.S. Citizen Richard Nguyen:

- Ambassador Shear and his staff continue to call on the Government of Vietnam to quickly and transparently resolve the case of Dr. Richard Nguyen (Nguyen Quoc Quan), and have used the visits of high-level U.S. officials, including Secretary Clinton, to underscore the importance of this case with senior officials in the Vietnamese government. Soon after learning of Dr. Nguyen's detention, our Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City began regular contact with Mrs. Mai Huong Ngo, the wife of Dr. Nguyen. Also, U.S. diplomats meet with Mr. Nguyen in prison to monitor his condition and provide our full consular assistance.

Promoting Human Rights:

- Ambassador Shear raised the need for progress on human rights in nearly every introductory call he conducted with senior Vietnamese officials upon his arrival as Ambassador in August 2011, including in meetings with the President and the Prime Minister of Vietnam.
- Ambassador Shear has continued his mission to promote human rights at subsequent meetings with Vietnamese leaders. Mission staff in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City reinforce his message through their own contacts at every level of government and during official trips to the provinces.

- We have urged the release of Father Ly, Le Cong Dinh, Dieu Cay, and other prisoners of conscience in repeated meetings with Vietnamese officials at all levels.
- To further demonstrate to the Government of Vietnam our commitment to human rights, Ambassador Shear hosted a meeting with three of Vietnam's leading human rights and civil society advocates during the January visit to Hanoi of Senators McCain, Lieberman, Whitehouse, and Ayotte. This event marked the very first time these three leaders on human rights and civil society (all under heavy surveillance) were brought together for a meeting of this kind.
- While the overall human rights situation remains poor, we have achieved some successes. Public attention and private pressure helped lead to the release of Bui Thi Minh Hang, a well known democracy activist sentenced to five years in a re-education camp last December. Ms. Hang has stated to us on several occasions that her release would not have been possible without the Embassy's engagement.

Promoting Religious Freedom:

- The Ambassador and Mission staff meet regularly with religious figures from various denominations to advance our commitment to religious freedom. When security personnel attacked Catholic Redemptorists in Hanoi in late 2011, the Embassy responded immediately by meeting with parishioners and registering our concern with government officials.
- Ambassador Shear has met with senior officials from the government's Commission for Religious Affairs to press for an increase in the number of church registrations in the Northwest Highlands and translation of the Bible into the Modern H'mong language.
- Ambassador Shear has met twice with the Vatican's Non-Permanent Resident to signal our support for his efforts and explore ways to promote religious pluralism. He has also met with the Evangelical Church of Vietnam-North leader to underline our commitment to this important issue.
- Ambassador Shear met with Protestant leaders in Vietnam to discuss religious freedom openly and frankly and to demonstrate his commitment to religious freedom.

Promoting Freedom of Speech and of the Press:

- At his inaugural press conference last September, Ambassador Shear noted that we “disagree sharply” with Vietnam’s human rights practices and that he would “vigorously pursue” a human rights agenda with the Vietnamese government.
- The Ambassador joined other Chiefs of Mission in a collective November 2011 high-level meeting with the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) to register our opposition to new decrees which threaten to censor foreign broadcasters in Vietnam and impose further controls on Vietnam’s blogosphere.
- The U.S. Mission is at the forefront of a comprehensive like-minded effort in Hanoi with foreign embassies from the Coalition for Freedom Online to protest additional MIC measures, including decrees which would require Google, Yahoo, and other major international companies to censor or take down “objectionable” content as defined by the Vietnamese government.
- We have also emphasized media training to build skills in Vietnam’s politically repressive environment, including a ten-day program on investigative reporting; resources from Washington’s Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund for our Fulbright alumni to lead intensive training sessions; and a Post-funded week-long training course that paired NGO leaders and journalists together to design media campaigns based on key civil society themes, including health and the environment.

Promoting Institutional Reforms for Civil Society:

- Civil society is a key focus, with the Ambassador hosting events including a roundtable discussion with independent scholars, rule of law advocates, and lawyers to discuss the status of civil society in Vietnam. The Ambassador also hosted an event during Pride Month in June to promote rights of the LGBT community. Vietnam’s Minister of Justice publicly stated his support for same-sex civil unions in July.
- Senior American Bar Association officials visited Hanoi in August 2011 to promote ABA’s Rule of Law Initiative (ROLI). With financial support from the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), ROLI is providing training workshops for lawyers and the judiciary

to strengthen capacity for legal advocacy and promote international standards in judicial reform and transparency in trial procedures.

- DRL has supported the Fair Labor Association's program *Promoting Sustainable Labor Compliance in Vietnam's Garments and Footwear Sector*. This program fosters ownership of monitoring and sustainable labor rights compliance among all stakeholders at the local level in Vietnam's garment and footwear sectors.
- In the coming year, DRL plans to begin additional new programs in support of increased democracy and human rights in Vietnam.
- Over the last three fiscal years, Mission Public Affairs has funded 17 democracy and civil society grants to develop Vietnam's civil society, address gender inequality, promote good governance with a focus on women, and improve education for provincial and ethnic minority groups.
- Land rights issues remain a complicated and pervasive problem in Vietnam. Many individuals and organizations have petitioned the government for the use of expropriated land. Post continues to strongly encourage the government at all levels to establish a transparent mechanism to settle ongoing property disputes.