

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

ZOE LOFGREN

19TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

August 3, 2021

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Vice President Harris,

I write to express my deep concerns about human rights in Vietnam ahead of your upcoming visit to Vietnam. As you know, the promotion of human rights is a crucial part of United States foreign policy, and it is particularly important to our relationship with Vietnam, as underscored in the United States-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership.

With these facts in mind, I urge you to raise the case of Nguyen Bac Truyen with Vietnamese leaders during your visit. Truyen's imprisonment illustrates Vietnam's shameful disregard for individual rights and freedoms within their borders.

Nguyen Bac Truyen, is a Vietnamese citizen, Hoa Hao Buddhist, and religious freedom advocate who is currently serving an eleven-year sentence for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration." Truyen founded the Vietnamese Political and Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, which aims to assist other prisoners of conscience and their families. After his arrest in 2017, Truyen was denied access to legal counsel, visits from family, and deliveries of food and medicine, and he was eventually sentenced following a one-day trial. In the latest Intimidation and Reprisal Report, the UN Secretary-General expressed concern regarding Truyen's frail health and lack of proper medical care in prison, proving the seriousness and the time-sensitive nature of the case.

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Vietnam has committed to protecting basic individual freedoms within their country. Further, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of association are all rights enshrined in Vietnam's constitution. The government of Vietnam can show its commitment to these freedoms within their country by releasing Nguyen Bac Truyen.

In order for our government to engage with the leaders of Vietnam, whom I have previously referred to as “thugs and liars in Hanoi” who “oppress their own people,” we must insist that the Vietnamese government show a willingness to improve the conditions for personal freedoms there. The release of Nguyen Bac Truyen would represent a key benchmark for human rights improvement in Vietnam and would make clear the Vietnamese government’s commitment to improving conditions for personal freedoms within their borders.

The approaching visit to Vietnam presents an opportunity to push for meaningful improvements in the situation for human rights within Vietnam. I urge you to raise the case of Nguyen Bac Truyen during this visit and push for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Zoe Lofgren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress