

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 20, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We write to bring pressing issues regarding health, environmental, and human rights concerns for your upcoming trip to Vietnam to your attention. We understand that you have received numerous messages, including letters from several of us, making requests of you for this trip. We hope you will give the important matters in this letter the same attention and consideration as you have given those requests.

An environmental catastrophe in Vietnam involving millions of dead fish washing ashore beginning in early April along the coastline is devastating the economy in coastal cities and presenting a health hazard for the people of Vietnam, and possibly abroad. The government's reaction to the disaster has been sluggish and to its own people calling for answers, violent.

Government officials waited three weeks to respond and investigate what was causing the fish to wash up dead in droves. There have been reports that fishermen have been collecting dead fish to sell, which could result in toxins being introduced into Vietnamese markets and elsewhere, if these fish are used as raw materials to make other products, such as fish sauce, and sold internationally.

A mile-long pipe that runs from Formosa Ha Tinh Steel Corporation, a subsidiary of the Taiwanese company Formosa Plastics Corporation, to the \$10.5 billion steel and port facility is being investigated by the Vietnamese government. Samples of fish from the affected areas near the steel plant contain traces of heavy metals, such as mercury, lead, and arsenic.

The government's delayed reaction to a calamity of this magnitude does not bode well for the country's intent to comply with its obligations in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). And, more than a month after the disaster was first reported the government has yet to release information about a cause.

In rare mass demonstrations in this communist country where dissenters and even those who simply practice a minority religion face beatings and arbitrary arrests, the people of Vietnam protested by the thousands from the streets of Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City to call for action and answers. Last Sunday, Vietnamese officials dispersed crowds with tear gas, beatings, and mass detentions. Even women and children were among those injured.

Urging the government of Vietnam to fully investigate this and hold the responsible parties accountable is imperative. We call on you to also advise that there be full transparency in the

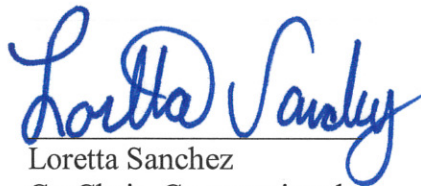
investigation of this environmental disaster. Not only is the coastal community's livelihood, but also people's health, at stake.

We also ask that you visit prisoners of conscience during your trip to Vietnam and listen to their stories. This will call attention to the over 100 prisoners of conscience being detained by the government for exercising their right of expression or practicing their religion. We have previously called on you to urge that they be immediately and unconditionally released. Taking the time to visit prisoners of conscience during your trip will show the government of Vietnam that the US is truly committed to this cause.

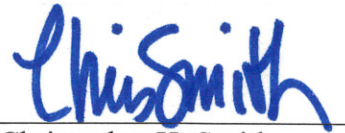
Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren  
Co-Chair, Congressional  
Caucus on Vietnam



Loretta Sanchez  
Co-Chair, Congressional  
Caucus on Vietnam



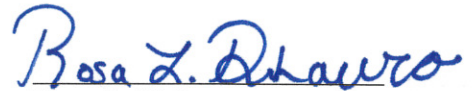
Christopher H. Smith  
Co-Chair, Congressional  
Caucus on Vietnam



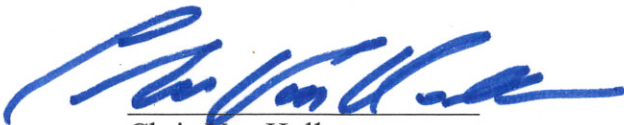
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress