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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

CHAIR, CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS ON VIETNAM

November 13, 2015

ZOE LOFGREN
19TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

I am writing to bring to your attention recent events in Vietnam: the beating of two lawyers, Tran Thu Nam and Le Van Luan, and their subsequent illegal detention by police. These lawyers were beaten by undercover police after meeting with the mother of Do Dang Du, a seventeen year old who was beaten into a coma by police and died six days later.

These incidents are just two examples of the Vietnamese government's abuse of power and denial of basic human rights. The State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 stated that in Vietnam, "[r]eports indicated officials or other agents under the command of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including reports of at least seven deaths of persons in custody, as well as several high-profile allegations officers abused use of lethal force." The Report also stated that Vietnam's most significant human rights abuses included, "police attacks and corporal punishment; arbitrary arrest and detention for political activities; continued police mistreatment of suspects during arrest and detention, including the use of lethal force and austere prison conditions; and denial of the right to a fair and expeditious trial."

I have serious concerns about rewarding the behavior of the Vietnamese government by giving Vietnam preferential access to our markets in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in light of their disregard for the basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam is a party. The Vietnamese government continues to arbitrarily arrest people and mistreat those in custody, jail activists and their families, and censor the Internet and block access to websites. I urge you to put human rights first as you interact with this government.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress