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One Hundred Fourteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

May 5, 2016

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I urge you to speak out in support of human rights and meet with dissidents and advocates on your visit to Vietnam later this month. This will be an important opportunity to make it clear that a closer relationship between the United States and Vietnam, particularly increased security cooperation, cannot develop while Vietnam's one-party, communist government remains highly repressive. Indeed, it is this abuse that stands as the main obstacle to closer ties between the two countries.

Vietnam's penal code criminalizes criticism of the government and "abuse of democratic freedoms," while other laws restrict—what should be protected—activities of religious groups, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, and the media. I am deeply concerned about the increasing number of cases in which dissidents have been harassed or subjected to violence at the hands of police or plainclothes government personnel. In 2015, human rights groups recorded at least 45 cases of assault against political dissidents and human rights advocates, a practice that continues.

The case of lawyer Nguyen Van Dai represents the abuse that those advocating for human rights often endure in Vietnam. Last December—just days after he was beaten by masked men—Nguyen was arrested for "spreading propaganda against the state." He has been kept in solitary confinement since his arrest and denied access to his lawyers and family. As Nguyen's wife recently testified in front of the Committee, his case is not an isolated incident. By calling for the release of all dissidents who remain in prison and meeting with those who have been released, you would send a powerful message of hope to those who work for basic human rights in Vietnam.

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Mr. President, if the United States and Vietnam are to build a stronger relationship, the Vietnamese government must honor the basic human rights of the Vietnamese people, including freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. I urge you to clearly and publicly express this at the highest levels while in Vietnam. Tens of millions of Vietnamese will be watching.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Royce", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

EDWARD R. ROYCE  
Chairman