



One Hundred Fifteenth 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)

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Daniel J. Kritenbrink  
American Ambassador  
Hanoi, Vietnam

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I am writing to urge you to raise serious concerns about the “Law on Belief and Religion” directly with the Vietnamese Government prior to its implementation on January 1, 2018. I fear that this new law will form the basis for continued mistreatment of those who seek to practice their faith in Vietnam.

This law requires all religious groups to register with the government and report on their activities. Its prohibition on religious activity that would “undermine national defense, national security, national sovereignty, public order, public safety, and the environment” is of particular concern. This vague language appears to give the Vietnamese Government broad authority to arbitrarily restrict religious activity.

The abhorrent treatment of Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh and his wife are emblematic of the widespread mistreatment of the faithful in Vietnam. Pastor Chinh was recently released after six years in custody, on the condition that he and his wife leave the country. I was honored to welcome him to my district office in Southern California. In this meeting, and a subsequent meeting with Members of Congress in Washington, he told of the beatings and harassment he and his family received at the hands of Vietnamese authorities.

While Pastor Chinh has been released, Thich Quang Do, the Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, and prominent Christian human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai remain in prison. They are just a few examples of the hundreds of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam.

Ambassador, as you raise concerns with this new law—as well as the cases of these brave men and women who remain detained—I urge you to make clear to the Vietnamese Government that security cooperation between the United States and Vietnam cannot advance if national security is used as pretext for religious persecution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Royce".

EDWARD R. ROYCE  
Chairman