

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We write today to respectfully request that you take a meaningful step to help advance religious freedom and related human rights in Vietnam by re-designating Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the *International Religious Freedom Act of 1998*. It is encouraging that the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi has publicly condemned recent arrests, detentions, and acts of violence that “contradict Vietnam’s own commitment to internationally accepted standards of human rights and the rule of law.” Unfortunately Vietnam’s oppression of its citizens, particularly over the last year, continues to demonstrate that public statements of concern are simply not enough.

We believe that the CPC designation is a powerful and effective tool to both spotlight abuses of religious freedom and to encourage specific improvement. When Vietnam was designated a CPC in the past, it did not hinder advancement on other bilateral interests, but led to real improvements on a number of critical human rights concerns. In addition, protecting and promoting religious freedom is a core American value and essential to the success of many of our global interests.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Human Rights Watch, and other organizations have provided credible evidence of severe and ongoing religious freedom violations in Vietnam, including the active suppression of independent religious activity, forced renunciations of faith, the expulsion of monks and nuns and effective disbandment of the order associated with the renowned Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, the jailing of religious freedom activists, and the human rights lawyers Le Cong Dinh and Nguyen Van Dai.

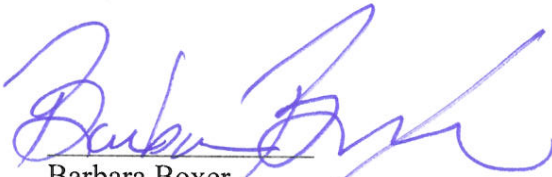
Additionally, the imprisonment of hundreds of Montagnard Christians and the ongoing arrests and harsh repression of Montagnards belonging to independent house churches is another indication that pressure must be brought to bear on the Vietnamese government. These issues are serious and indicate that Vietnam’s religious freedom situation warrants more concerted diplomatic action.

The U.S.-Vietnam relationship is progressing in many ways, and we acknowledge its importance. But we cannot allow Vietnam’s continued backsliding on human rights and related rule of law issues to continue with minimal reaction from the United States. Working to

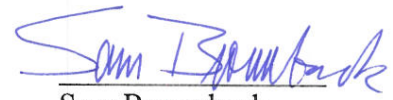
guarantee internationally recognized freedoms is in the interest of the American people, the Vietnamese people and future success of U.S.-Vietnam relations.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,




Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



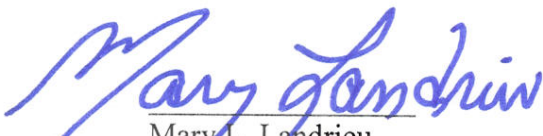
Sam Brownback  
United States Senator




Mark Begich  
United States Senator



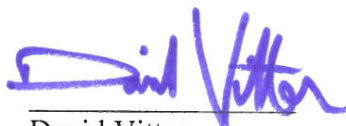
Tom Coburn  
United States Senator



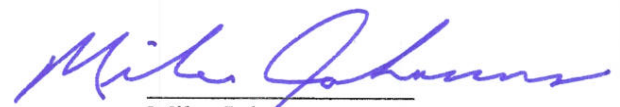
Mary L. Landrieu  
United States Senator



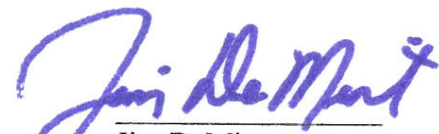
John Cornyn  
United States Senator



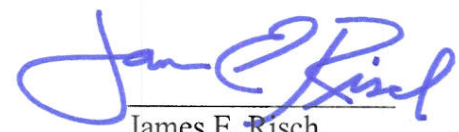
David Vitter  
United States Senator



Mike Johanns  
United States Senator



Jim DeMint  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator