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United Council of Vietnamese in Homeland and Overseas

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OPEN LETTER

**From the Vietnamese People at Home and Abroad
To President Donald Trump, the U.S. Congress,
And the Leaders of the Free Nations of the World
Regarding the visit of the Prime Minister of Vietnam to the United States**

Dear President and World Leaders:

We know that President Trump officially invited Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to visit the United States in late May 2017 to "strengthen the cooperation between the two countries."

We would be delighted to see this cooperation bring about practical benefits for the people of Vietnam, enabling them to enjoy freedom, democracy, prosperity and happiness; ensuring Vietnam's territorial integrity; and creating peace and stability for Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, especially in the South China Sea with its recent experience of Chinese military expansion.

However, we respectfully present to the President and other world Leaders the lack of freedom, the human rights abuses, and the unjust laws in Vietnam that adversely affect relations between Vietnam and other countries in the world.

The Communist Party of Vietnam has brought Communism into Vietnam over the past 70 years, causing calamities for its people. A major calamity was the invasion of the Republic of Vietnam wherein millions of people were killed and the country was devastated and divided. The consequences are with us even today.

1. In the realm of politics, the Communist government of Vietnam imposed a totalitarian regime, denied basic freedoms to its people, and persecuted patriotic citizens fighting for civil rights, human rights and the country's territorial integrity. The government now imprisons hundreds of political and religious prisoners, labeling them "anti-state," under unjust laws.

2. Economically, the government of Vietnam advocates a "socialist-oriented market economy" in which state-owned enterprises are primary. In essence, it is a state-controlled economy that enriches

party officials, allocates all land resources to the ruling party, and damages national economic strength and the people's living conditions, which are among the world's worst.

3- In education, the government monopolizes information and schooling, exerting control over all forms of culture and all religions, debasing the nation's traditional norms, and ensuring that citizens lack basic freedoms and creative power.

4. In the areas of social welfare and the environment, human and social well-being is increasingly unstable due to injustice, oppression, Mafia-like gangs, and pervasive corruption. Recently, Hoa Hao Buddhist Nguyen Huu Tan, 39, died tragically, his throat cut at the Vinh Long police station for allegedly storing documents promoting "propaganda against the state." In the past few years alone, there have been hundreds of unjustified deaths in police stations that have not been explained or redressed.

The environment, meanwhile, has gone unprotected, with widespread disasters stemming from government collusion with foreign companies to exploit natural resources. A recent disaster occurred at Vung Ang, Ha Tinh province, at the hands of the Formosa company. Despite its causing great damage to people's lives, the authorities have not only ignored the incident but also repressed those who have appealed for justice, including two Catholic priests in the Diocese of Vinh.

5- Diplomacy and national defense have also suffered. The Communist Party of Vietnam depends on China for its ideology and politics, economics and finance, and commerce and technology via a process akin to franchising. Hanoi deals with the world only to profit the Communist Party without embracing the spirit of humanity and freedom or creating welfare for the people.

Therefore, we Vietnamese inside and abroad respectfully request the President, the Congress of the United States, and other Heads of State to:

1. Make human rights an important condition in economic, security and defense negotiations. Force the Vietnamese government to respect basic freedoms, and stop harassing and imprisoning those advocating freedom, human rights, justice and a clean environment. Only when human rights are respected can citizens live free and happy and society develop.
2. Pressure the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience, such as Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, Mr. Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, "Me Nam" Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, "Anh Ba Sam" Nguyen Huu Vinh, lawyer Nguyen Van Dai, Ms. Tran Thi Nga, and many others as well as Buddhist, Catholic, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Protestant dignitaries.
3. Help the struggle of the people of Vietnam for freedom, because only a free Vietnam can forge a good alliance with the United States and the world to ensure stability in the South China Sea.

We, the undersigned, thank you and wish you God's blessings.

Made in Vietnam and abroad, May 24, 2017, by

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