



The White House

Office of the Vice President

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20500

August 18, 2021

Dear Madame Vice President,

Addressing the present relationship between the United States and Vietnam at his confirmation hearing last month, US Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper noted that, “only when we see significant progress on human rights can our partnership reach its fullest potential.”

Madame Vice President, we the undersigned human rights organizations have every reason to believe that you share the ambassador’s position and we hope that you will use the opportunity of your upcoming mission to Vietnam to emphasize the importance of human rights with Vietnamese leaders. Specifically, we’d like to ask that you highlight the case of [Tran Huynh Duy Thuc](#), the prominent democracy activist and blogger who is currently on a prolonged hunger strike.

In 2010, Thuc was sentenced to 16 years in prison for writing articles online calling for multi-party democracy in Vietnam. The government charged him with “attempting to overthrow the government” under Article 79 the 1999 Criminal Code (109 in the current Criminal Code of 2015).

For the past three years Thuc and his lawyers have been trying to persuade Vietnam’s Supreme Court to review his case. The Court has not even acknowledged receiving his request, forcing Thuc to literally put his life on the line with multiple hunger strikes just to be heard.

His treatment at virtually every step of the legal process has been in flagrant violation of his right to a fair trial, established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Constitution of Vietnam.

Now, according to Thuc’s daughter, even though her father’s will remains unbreakable, his health is deteriorating to the point that death in custody has become a distinct possibility. In the past, Thuc has also been subjected to ill-treatment, in violation of the international prohibition against torture.

Please see attached the latest [report](#) by The 88 Project on Thuc’s current condition for your information.



We ask that you use your mission to Vietnam to express your strictest concerns over the ongoing denial of Thuc’s right to a fair trial and his right against ill-treatment, call upon the government of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, without preconditions such as the “freedom for exile” choice forced upon other prisoners of conscience. We see this as an important step if the US is to prioritize “significant progress on human rights” as a critical component of US-Vietnam relations.

Sincerely,

1. [Access Accountability](#)
2. [Article 19](#)
3. [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)
4. [Defend the Defenders](#)
5. [CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation](#)
6. [Human Rights Foundation](#)
7. [International Federation for Human Rights](#)
8. [Our Vietnam](#)
9. [PEN America](#)
10. [People in Need](#)
11. [Safeguards Defenders](#)
12. [The 88 Project](#)
13. [Transitional Justice Working Group](#)