

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2024

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We appreciate the Administration's efforts in strengthening U.S. relations with Vietnam, including through the historic signing of the U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in September 2023. However, we are concerned that our bilateral cooperation is deepening against the backdrop of a deteriorating human rights environment in Vietnam. For the U.S.-Vietnam relationship to reach its full potential, our engagement should be accompanied by tangible progress on human rights and good governance.

We note with concern recent decisions by the Vietnamese authorities to increase restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, religious freedom, and labor rights. "Directive No. 24" issued by the Communist Party of Vietnam portends further crackdowns on civil society and the rights of Vietnamese citizens to express themselves freely both at home and abroad.

We encourage you to advocate for meaningful and sustainable improvements in Vietnam's human rights environment. The United States must integrate human rights into all aspects of our bilateral discussions, and not raise these issues solely in the U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue. We urge you to impress upon Vietnamese officials that genuine progress in human rights will enable a deeper economic, trade, and security relationship with the United States. Advancing the freedom of association, in particular, is central to establishing the kind of stable regulatory environment that gives U.S. investors confidence to choose Vietnam for investment and supply chain diversification.

The detention and imprisonment of human rights defenders in Vietnam is also a matter of increasing concern. We ask that you advocate for the immediate release of Dang Dinh Bach, Do Nam Trung, Hoang Thi Minh Hong, and all political prisoners currently jailed for their peaceful dissent. We also ask that you advocate for the immediate release of journalists Nguyen Vu Binh, Nguyen Lan Thang, Nguyen Thong Thuy, Truong Duy Nhat, Pham Chi Dung, Pham Doan Trang, and Nguyen Van Hoa. Hoa was released from jail in January after serving a seven-year sentence, but remains under house arrest with the possibility of re-arrest.

Advancing human rights in Vietnam is not only a key U.S. value, it is also vital to fostering deeper and more meaningful ties between our two nations. The Vietnamese people also appreciate and acknowledge U.S. support for human rights in Vietnam.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator