

H. Res. 231

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

November 13, 1997.

Whereas the Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1996 notes that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam “denied citizens the right to change their government and significantly restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, privacy, and religion”;

Whereas, since May 1997, non-violent demonstrations against corruption and abuse of power at the local level have occurred in Thai Binh Province and perhaps in Thanh Hoa, Hung Yen, Nghe An, and Bien Hoa provinces as well;

Whereas the criminal law of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is used to punish individuals who are critical of the government, and on April 14, 1997, an administrative decree was signed into law granting enhanced judicial powers to the security forces to place under house arrest or subject to reeducation camps, for up to two years, any civilians expected of “endangering national security”;

Whereas the leaders of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam are seeking to expand trade relations with the United States;

Whereas there is widespread discontent within the foreign business community in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,

with some companies pulling out entirely, others freezing new investments, and nearly all complaining about endemic corruption, intransigent bureaucracy, and a lack of clear commitment to legitimate economic reform;

Whereas, in August 1997, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that child labor exploitation is on the rise in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with tens of thousands of children under 15 years of age being exploited for labor; and

Whereas it is in the interest of the United States to promote political and economic freedom throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) urges the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners, including Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, Prof. Doan Viet Hoat, Venerable Thich Quang Do, Reverend Pham Minh Tri, and evangelist To Dinh Trung, with full restoration of their civil and human rights;

(2) requests the President to make clear to the leadership of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam—

(A) the firm commitment of the American people to political and religious and economic freedom for the people of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; and

(B) the United States fully expects equal protection under the law to all Vietnamese, regardless

of religious belief, political philosophy, or previous association; and

(3) urges the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam—

(A) to permit all political organizations in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to function without intimidation or harassment; and

(B) to announce a framework and timetable for free and fair elections that will allow the Vietnamese people to peacefully choose their local and national leaders.

Attest:

Clerk.