



FREEDOM NOW

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MEDIA RELEASE

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November 16, 2009

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FREEDOM NOW CONCERNED BY WORSENING MEDICAL CONDITION AND URGES VIETNAM PRESIDENT TO RELEASE RENOWNED HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE FATHER NGUYEN VAN LY

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While kneeling to pray on November 14, 2009, Father Nguyen Van Ly collapsed and suffered a stroke. This is the second stroke Father Ly has suffered this year, and as a result he is now paralyzed on the right side of his body. He is currently undergoing tests and treatment at a hospital in Hanoi where doctors believe he may have a blockage in his brain. Father Ly's family has been permitted intermittent access to visit him and bring him food and changes of clothes from the five or so guards who surround Father Ly's room.

Father Ly is a 63-year-old Catholic priest and a prominent advocate for religious freedom, democracy, and human rights in Vietnam, for which he has been repeatedly harassed and imprisoned. In a four-hour trial on March 30, 2007, he was accused and convicted of disseminating anti-government propaganda and sentenced to eight years in prison and five years house arrest. During the trial, Father Ly was physically restrained, gagged, and prohibited from putting forth a defense. Since that time, Father Ly has served his time in solitary confinement with limited visits from family. Father Ly is an inspirational symbol among Vietnamese activists and human rights defenders everywhere.

Freedom Now Executive Director Maran Turner stated: "We are very concerned for Father Ly's welfare and though it seems he is now receiving much needed medical attention, it is vital that Father Ly be released immediately so that he can have consistent medical attention and be with his family without restriction. We ask the Government of Vietnam to release Father Ly immediately both on humanitarian grounds and out of its commitment to honor international law."

On July 1, 2009, a bipartisan group of 37 members of the United States Senate, led by Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Sam Brownback (R-KS) requested President Nguyễn Minh Triết to release Father Ly, noting "serious flaws in relation to [Father Ly's] arrest, trial, and imprisonment".

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