



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 1, 2013

His Excellency, Thorbjørn Jagland
Chairman
Norwegian Nobel Committee
Henrik Ibsens Gate 51
0255 Oslo
Norway

Dear Chairman Jagland and Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee:

We, the undersigned Members of the United States Congress, are pleased to nominate Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do of Vietnam for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Both men are prominent religious leaders, democracy activists, and prisoners of conscience. Undeterred by constant persecution as a result of their work promoting fundamental human rights in Vietnam, they have continued advocating for the rights of all Vietnamese citizens at great personal cost.

Father Ly, 66, is a Roman Catholic priest who has spent the past 37 years promoting religious liberty and has been repeatedly detained by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and subjected to brutal conditions of confinement. He has been sentenced four times, adding up to a total of 53 years in prison and ten years of house arrest.

In 2006, Father Ly was a founding member of a pro-democracy group called Bloc 8406. The group, which promoted multi-party democracy and freedom of religion, expression, and association, sought to unite Vietnamese activists inside and outside the country. Father Ly wrote numerous articles about human rights, religious freedom, and democracy and co-founded the Vietnam Progression Party.

In response, Vietnamese authorities arrested Father Ly in the spring of 2007 and charged him with disseminating propaganda against the government, specifically citing his work promoting religious and political liberty. At trial, the government denied Father Ly access to legal counsel, prevented him from presenting a defense, and sentenced him to eight years in prison followed by five years of house arrest. When Father Ly was placed in solitary confinement, his health deteriorated severely and he suffered a series of strokes. Although the government released Father Ly on humanitarian parole on March 15, 2010 to seek treatment for a brain tumor, authorities rearrested him on July 25, 2011 despite his continued health problems. As a result, he

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is back in confinement and serving the prison sentence imposed in response to his legitimate human rights activism.

Like Father Ly, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, 84, is a longtime Vietnamese advocate for democracy and freedom of religion. A respected religious scholar, lecturer, and author, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do leads the independent Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), which for the past 37 years has been outlawed by the government, and has spent decades of his life in detention because of his public advocacy. In a deeply divided Vietnam, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do emerged in 1977 as the primary leader and proponent of peaceful opposition to the Vietnamese government. In the primarily Buddhist country, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do's initiatives and commitment to nonviolence have garnered significant support inside Vietnam and abroad.

In 2001, he launched an "Appeal for Democracy in Vietnam," which called for an end to one-party rule in Vietnam and sought to unify the disparate religious and political groups in support of peaceful democratic change. Vietnamese authorities responded by sentencing him without trial to administrative detention. Shortly after his release in 2003, the government placed the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do under "temple arrest" after he participated in an assembly of the UBCV. He remains detained, without charge and despite his advanced age and history of diabetes and heart problems.

Both of these brave leaders have dedicated their lives to their respective faiths and to the promotion of fundamental human rights in Vietnam. As a result, their government has subjected them to exceptionally long periods of detention. Despite that persecution, both remain committed to peaceful reform in their homeland. Conferring the Nobel Peace Prize on Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do would shine a light on their continued detention and serve as an important recognition that fundamental human rights, including the rights to freedom of religion and to peaceful political expression, assembly, and association, are universal values that must be respected by all governments.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress



ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress