

HUMAN DIGNITY VIOLATIONS IN VIETNAM
Demonstration at Vietnam Official Residence in Canada
Dec 10, 2017 (International Human Rights Day)
Notes for remarks by David Kilgour
Ottawa

Thank you all for coming today from Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and elsewhere.

It is cold and snowy, so permit me to quote immediately from similar letters sent to the prime minister of Canada and premier of Ontario last month by the Canadian Youth for Human Rights in Vietnam (info@ Suite 1 – 885 Somerset St. West Ottawa, ON K1R 6R6 1 (613) 230-8282):

The Vietnamese Communist government ignores all international criticisms and subjects Vietnamese citizens to brutal treatment to silence political dissidents in contravention of all international conventions and agreements of which they are signatories. Vietnam ranks 175th out of 180 countries in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index and is an “Enemy of the Internet,” according to Reporters without Borders.

According to Human Right Watch (HRW), “in June 2017, the Vietnamese National Assembly passed revisions to the penal code that will come into effect on January 1, 2018. Instead of repealing articles contrary to human rights standards, lawmakers introduced even harsher provisions. The revised penal code also holds lawyers criminally responsible for not reporting clients to the authorities for a number of ‘crimes’.” HRW also reports that during 2017, the authorities arrested at least 22 rights bloggers and activists.

Nguyen Van Hoa, a 22-year-old activist, was sentenced on November 27, 2017, to seven years in prison for “spreading anti-state propaganda” by the People’s Court in Ha Tinh Province. In fact, all he did was produce online videos and interviews related to the worst ever environmental disaster in Vietnam caused by the Formosa Plastics Group’s steel complex in that province. The discharge flushed cyanide and other chemicals through its waste pipeline, killing marine life, rendering many people sick along a 120-mile stretch of coastline, and causing extreme poverty to millions of people. Phil Robertson, Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch’s Asia division, denounced the verdict: “How else can one explain that executives of an international firm that poisoned the ocean, ruining the coastal economy in four provinces, are free to go about their business while this idealistic young journalist is heading to prison for helping expose their misdeeds?”

Lawyer Vo An Don, who has defended political dissidents as well as victims of corruption in Vietnam, had his practicing certificate recently (Nov. 26, 2017) revoked by the Bar Association of the Province of Phu Yen for having the courage to raise concerns on the corrupt nature of the justice system in Vietnam;

Phan Kim Khanh, a university student and blogger, aged 24, was sentenced on Oct 25, 2017 to six years in prison and an additional four years of house arrest after completion his prison term on charges of spreading “propaganda against the state”;

Ms. Tran Thi Nga, a political dissident with two very young children, was sentenced in July 2017 to nine years in prison followed by five years under house arrest for spreading “anti-state propaganda.” She was arrested for sharing articles and videos online highlighting ongoing human rights abuses related to environmental crises and political corruption;

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Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, a well-known blogger with the pen name “Mother Mushroom”, also with young children, was sentenced to 10 years in prison in June 2017 for similar accusations, specifically for raising concerns about the Formosa environmental disaster.

HRW has listed 105 Vietnamese people imprisoned for exercising their political or religious rights. Thank you very much for your continuing support of human rights worldwide. Trusting that my request will receive your approval, I remain, needless to say, there are still numerous others who are not internationally known.

Conclusion

Last month in Paris, there was an international conference, “Communism at 100 years”. My contribution focused on China as one of the remaining authentically Leninist nations left among about 190 independent countries. It can be accessed at www.david-kilgour.com.

Vietnam is of course one of the group too. More information about it can be found on my website under its own heading.

Thanks/Merci.