

**Vietnamese-Canadian community organizations (33) from Toronto,  
Montreal, Ottawa and other centres across Canada**

**Parliament Hill demonstration against the Internet Security Law and the  
Special Economic Zones Bill in Việt Nam,**

Notes for Remarks by Hon. David Kilgour, J.D.

Ottawa

7 July 2018



Chers amis/cheres amies,

This rally is being held on Parliament Hill and later at the Vietnamese and Chinese embassies in coordination with similar ones today in Việt Nam and around the world to protest an internet security law recently passed by the National Assembly of Việt Nam, which seeks to muzzle peaceful political dissent. We are also protesting the Special Economic Zones Bill, initiated to formalize a secret agreement to cede Vietnamese territory to the party-state in China.

The 33 organizations, representing democratic Vietnamese organizations across Canada today, declare in part:

“We demand that the Vietnamese communist authorities stop the implementation of the Internet Security Law because it violates the

Vietnamese people's freedom of expression and their right to improve their knowledge...;

- “We condemn the plan of the Vietnamese Communist authorities... to sell out the country through the Special Economic Zones Law;
- “(We) demand that the Vietnamese Communist authorities stop arresting those who demonstrate for justice, for a clean environment, for sovereignty, for citizens' rights, etc., and to unconditionally release peaceful dissidents and all prisoners of conscience.”

“(We) demand that the Communist authorities and their rubber-stamp National Assembly return to Vietnamese people their rightful ownership of the country, their right to free elections to choose worthy people to represent them and to build the country...”

Other speakers today are providing more details on these two important matters.

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Permit me to add a few words about one of many heroic individuals in Vietnam:

Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh-“Mother Mushroom”



Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, one of Vietnam's most prominent bloggers, is best known by her penname, "Mother Mushroom" [Mẹ Nấm]. She has been in prison since 2016.

In 2017, Quỳnh was sentenced to 10 years in prison after a one-day ‘trial’. The charges were in connection with 18 articles she posted online, including reports on an industrial toxic spill that devastated large areas of

Việt Nam's coast. Prior to her arrest, she wrote on her own blog and other online news platforms. She reported on sensitive issues censored by the state-controlled media, including land-grabbing by officials, environmental degradation and police brutality. She also helped found the Network of Vietnamese Bloggers [MLBVN], a group of independent journalists who banded together to call for media freedom.

At Khánh Hòa prison, Quỳnh spent two months in a room without air vents and light. She went on a hunger strike and did not eat food from the camp from fear of strange symptoms after she ate. Since June 21<sup>st</sup>, Quỳnh has been locked inside her room and its electricity was cut. The government of Việt Nam has detained at least ten journalists, including Quỳnh. All are in prison.

Quỳnh also faced frequent harassment prior to her arrest. Local police repeatedly called her in for questioning and temporarily detained her in connection with her online journalism. In late 2013, authorities banned her from traveling abroad.

She prophetically told the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in 2014 that she feared she would eventually be arrested and jailed. Earlier that year, Quỳnh told CPJ about how she often disguised her appearance to evade officials who monitored her meetings and movements.

Prison authorities have refused Quỳnh medical treatment since her arrest, according to news reports. Earlier this year, she was transferred to a prison facility far from her home province, making it more difficult for her family to visit. In May, she staged a week-long hunger strike to protest against poor prison conditions, according to reports citing her mother.

The Committee to Protect Journalists presented its 2018 International Press Freedom Award to Quỳnh.

I'm delighted to tell those of you who don't yet know that Dr. Marc Arnal, Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the Campus St. Jean at the U of Alberta in Edmonton, has nominated Quỳnh for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

The spirit and will of Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh cannot be contained, and is expressed in her inspiring message:

I want to build a just society and a good country. A country of self-reliance required a foundation of freedom and justice. Citizens are happy and free, when they enjoy the freedom of speech to express their opinion. I want all to speak up and fight to overcome self-doubt, so that we can build a better country for ourselves.”

Thank you all for coming today/Merci mille fois.