

A sample letter urging the Vietnam government to release Nguyen Van Dai

[Date]

Dear Ambassador,

I would like to congratulate the People's Republic of Vietnam for hosting the APEC Pacific-rim summit and for recent membership of the World Trade Organisation. There is now an excellent opportunity for the Government of Vietnam to demonstrate its commitment to international standards on human rights.

In highlighting the importance of human rights protections as part of Vietnam's membership in the international community, in particular the rights to freedom of expression, I am writing to express my concern at the arrest and detention of the Christian lawyer and human rights defender Nguyen Van Dai on March 6th 2007. Nguyen Van Dai has been charged with breaching Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code.

His continued detention violates Vietnam's obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Your government has said many times that Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of expression. Arresting and imprisoning people like Nguyen Van Dai, an accomplished advocate and ambassador for recent progress in Vietnam specifically in the area of human rights, directly contradicts this and only damages Vietnam's standing in the eyes of the international community.

I would also like to urge the Government of Vietnam to repeal or amend the 1999 Criminal Code as a matter of urgency to bring it into line with Vietnam's international human rights obligations. In so doing, to ensure that ambiguous provisions relating to national security are clearly defined or removed, so they cannot be applied in an arbitrary manner to stifle legitimate dissent, debate, opposition, and freedom of expression.

I ask you to uphold the rights of all Vietnamese citizens to freedom of expression and to release Nguyen Van Dai immediately. At the same time I urge your government to adopt all legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure the rights and freedoms for the defense of human rights as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights defenders (1998).

Yours sincerely,

[Name]