

October 31, 2001

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai  
Office of the Prime Minister  
1 Bach Thao, Hanoi  
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Dear Honorable Khai

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the recent trial and sentencing of Father Nguyen Van Ly. We call upon the Vietnamese government to release Father Ly and all other prisoners of conscience.

In May of 2001, An Truyen parish was surrounded by over 600 security police and Reverend Nguyen Van Ly was arrested as he prepared to say Mass. He was held without trial for almost four months despite protests from the United States State Department, the European Parliament, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other international organizations. On October 19, 2001, the Vietnamese government sentenced this peaceful Catholic priest to a term of 15 years in prison and 5 years under house arrest

We are concerned that the harsh sentence against Father Ly is part of an escalating pattern of religious and human rights repression on the part of the government against the people. Of particular concern are: the Venerable Thich Quang Do, under house arrest since May, Most Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, detained for over 20 years, the fourteen ethnic Montagnards sentenced for their role in the February protests in the Central Highlands, and all other prisoners of conscience being held or harassed by the Vietnamese government.

We appeal to the Vietnamese government to cease its policy of persecution against its own citizens, and call for the immediate release of Father Ly and all prisoners of conscience. We urge Vietnam to honor its international commitments, especially the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Civil and Political Rights.

We would appreciate an update on the health and well-being of Father Ly, Venerable Do and Venerable Quang.

Sincerely,