



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

May 15, 2017

Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh  
Xuan Loc Prison  
Dong Nai Province, Vietnam

Mrs. Tran Thi Hong  
Hoa Lu Ward, Pleiku City,  
Gia Lai Province, Vietnam

Dear Pastor Chinh and Mrs. Hong:

I write to you as a Commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and a person of faith who is deeply concerned about your well-being. I want to express my Commission's and my own support and solidarity with you as you continue your struggles in support of religious freedom. Your plight rightfully has drawn the attention of people worldwide.

This is a poignant time to highlight your struggle. Twelve years ago this month, the United States and Vietnam reached an agreement requiring the Vietnamese government to improve religious freedom conditions in your country. Sadly, and as you know all too well, this agreement largely has been followed by more restrictions, not more freedom.

Tragically, Pastor Chinh, your detention for more than five years of your 11-year prison sentence is clearly and completely unjust. I understand that the Vietnamese authorities are denying you vitally needed medical treatment as you serve prison time for the alleged crime of "undermining national solidarity." As a minister to the Christian community in the Central Highlands, the government should protect, not punish, your voice for peaceful criticism of restrictions on religious freedom.

Mrs. Hong, we understand that you too have been subjected to frequent government surveillance and harassment, including one year ago this month when Vietnamese police officers harshly interrogated you, burst into your home and assaulted your son. Please know that I will not forget your family's ill-treatment.

As a religious freedom advocate myself, I have been deeply inspired by both of you and your resiliency under these cruel conditions. As long as you remain in prison, Pastor, and as long as the Vietnamese authorities continue to unfairly treat you and your family, please be assured that I am dedicated to publicly and privately working on your behalf, so that your family can be reunited and you can freely practice your faith, openly and without further threat.

With deepest respect,



Ambassador Jackie Wolcott

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*Ambassador Jackie Wolcott is a Commissioner at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a U.S. government body that monitors the universal right to religious freedom.*

*USCIRF's Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project highlights the plight of individuals who have been imprisoned for their religious beliefs, practices or identity. To learn more about this project or to interview a Commissioner, please contact USCIRF at [media@uscirf.gov](mailto:media@uscirf.gov).*

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