Congresswoman calls for U.S., international rebuke following desecration of crucifix in Dong Chiem parish cemetery

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) today released the following statement regarding the desecration of a crucifix in Vietnam's historic Dong Chiem parish cemetery by Vietnamese police officers. The authorities, who were dressed in riot gear, attacked at least a dozen parishioners and bystanders who protested the crucifix's destruction.

"I am extremely concerned by new reports that Vietnamese authorities intentionally destroyed one of the most sacred symbols of the Catholic faith. These senseless actions have insulted communities of faith across the world and seriously undermined the government's reputation. When will Vietnam learn that its government will only be legitimate when it respects religious freedom, fundamental human rights, and the democratic process?

"I hope the U.S. and international communities will strongly condemn this act of persecution and take concrete action to address it. This is not the first report of citizens being harassed for their religious beliefs, nor, I fear, will it be the last. I believe the State Department must re-designate Vietnam as a County of Particular Concern in order to send a strong signal that we will not tolerate continued abuses of religious freedom."

# # #