

April 5, 2007: U.S. Rep. Sanchez Visits Vietnam

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Contact: Paula Negrete

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202-225-2965

Khoi Ta

714-417-7552 cell

U.S. Rep. Sanchez Visits Vietnam:

Police Physically Restrain Wives of Dissidents From Meeting Sanchez

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D- Garden Grove) joined an armed services congressional delegation in Vietnam after three previous visa denials by the Vietnamese government. The delegation held meetings regarding the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command's mission to account for missing American soldiers.

Sanchez, who represents one of largest Vietnamese constituencies outside of Vietnam, seized the opportunity to meet with the wives of political dissidents (many who are imprisoned or under house arrest) at the invitation of U.S. Ambassador Michael W. Marine to discuss the recent escalation of human rights violations by the Vietnamese government.

Unfortunately, the wives were blocked entrance to the Ambassador's residence and physically coerced off the premises by Vietnamese police.

"The situation in Vietnam has reached a boiling point when Americans cannot freely meet with regular citizens," stated Sanchez. "None of the women face criminal charges; other invited guests were barricaded at their homes by Vietnamese officials preventing them from attending."

"The recent crackdown on pro-democracy advocates in Vietnam is unacceptable," said Sanchez. Recent incidents include: the sentencing of 8 years in prison for Father Nguyen Van Ly, the arrests of human rights attorneys Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan and Le Quoc Quan; and the unmet medical needs of incarcerated journalist Nguyen Vu Binh. Nearly 200 people are thought to have been held without trial, including the Venerable Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang, leaders of the outlawed Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam.

"The Government of Vietnam has ignored the countless requests from our Congress to improve its human rights record, stop oppression and grant citizens greater political and religious freedoms."

Sanchez, co-founder of the Vietnam Caucus, opposed the U.S. granting Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) to Vietnam due to the lack of human rights protections in the trade agreement.

A tireless advocate for human rights, Sanchez has continuously challenged the Government of Vietnam to change its repressive human rights policy that is implicated in political and religious persecution. She has promoted awareness and

policy debates in the U.S. Congress, urging her colleagues to address the human rights violations as it considers the United States' relationship with Vietnam.

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