

## May 10, 2007: Sanchez Remarks at Human Rights Caucus Briefing

The Honorable Rep. Loretta Sanchez

Congressional Human Rights Caucus Briefing

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representative Loretta Sanchez, co-founder of the Caucus on Vietnam, delivered remarks during a Congressional Human Rights Caucus hearing. Below are her remarks as prepared.

"I would like to start by thanking our panelists for coming to speak to us today.

"I appreciate all of our panelists coming in to share their perspectives on the current human rights situation in Vietnam.

"As you may know, I represent Orange County, California, which is home to one of the largest Vietnamese communities in the world, outside of Vietnam.

"I have visited Vietnam three times, despite three other instances where my visas were denied. The most recent trip was barely a month ago.

"As you may know, during the trip, the treatment I received from the Vietnamese government was not from a civilized government.

"As I left Vietnam, I wondered - "I can leave, but what about the 80 millions Vietnamese that cannot leave?" If the Vietnamese authorities treated me like that, how do they treat their own citizens?

"I have been working with my colleagues in the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam for years to advance human rights for the people of Vietnam.

"Now, we are at a critical juncture. My observation is that, after gaining entry into the WTO, the Vietnamese government continues to shun international pressure, and ignores this Congress. Perhaps more so than in the past.

"Mr. Le Quoc Quan, a lawyer who traveled to the U.S. to serve as a Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy was arrested within a week of his return home, and charged with engaging in activities aimed at overthrowing the government.

"Since when, that studying at NED, becomes an act of overthrowing the government?

"Today, tomorrow, and the coming weeks, many Vietnamese democracy activists will be put on trial in Vietnam.

"What kind of kangaroo court will the VN authorities put on - the kind that allows no legal representation for defendants, no visitation for family members, and with predetermined outcomes?

"The kind that Father Ly went through? (raise the picture of Father Ly being gagged - attached with this).

"It is important that this Congress pushes for the Government of Vietnam to release all political and religious prisoners to demonstrate religious tolerance toward all of its citizens.

"Congress must let the Vietnamese government know that if Vietnam is serious about joining the international community, it must adhere to international norms and principles.

"And that Vietnam must follow its own laws!

"Human rights is central to our relationship with any country, and Vietnam is no exception.

"I thank all of our guests for their presence here today and look forward to what I am sure will be an informative and inspiring discussion."

