

June 21, 2007: Sanchez, Pelosi Meet with Pro-Democracy Advocates

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Sanchez, Pelosi Meet with Pro-Democracy Advocates in Advance of Meeting with President of Vietnam

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-Garden Grove) joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in meeting with pro-democracy advocates in anticipation of President Nguyen Minh Triet's visit to Capitol Hill on June 21. Triet is scheduled to meet separately with Speaker Pelosi and President Bush. The congresswomen were joined by Diem Do of the Viet Tan Party, Bich Nguyen of the National Congress of Vietnamese Americans and the Venerable Thich Giac Duc who expressed their grave concerns with Vietnam's oppressive human rights record.

Sanchez and Pelosi have led congressional efforts in bringing attention to the recent escalation of human rights violations in Vietnam which 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.

"We have worked very closely with these leaders in bringing national attention to the situation in Vietnam," said Sanchez. "We wanted to give the Vietnamese community an opportunity to share their concerns before the Speaker's meeting with President Triet tomorrow."

"It is my hope that human rights will be a topic of discussion for President Bush's meeting with Triet. Human rights must play an integral part in shaping our country's bilateral relationship with Vietnam."

Sanchez, co-founder of the Vietnam Caucus, recently celebrated the release of Nguyen Vu Binh, a Vietnamese democracy activist who was charged with a seven year prison term. In February, Sanchez wrote a letter to Secretary Condoleezza Rice who subsequently made a similar request to the Government of Vietnam. Le Quoc Quan, a fellow of the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, nominated by Sanchez, was released over the weekend and reunited with his family after the tireless work of the Vietnamese community and government officials.

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