

## July 26, 2007: Sanchez Outraged by Police Brutality in Vietnam

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 2007

### SANCHEZ OUTRAGED BY POLICE BRUTALITY IN VIETNAM

Over 30 peaceful protesters severely injured by police

Washington, D.C. - Outraged by reports of police brutality at a peaceful protest in Vietnam last week, Rep. Loretta Sanchez wrote a letter to President Triet of Vietnam expressing her disappointment, and urged him to keep his promise in changing Vietnam's oppressive human rights record. Approximately 30 Vietnamese citizens were severely injured by police during the peaceful sit-in of over 1,700 citizens in attendance.

"I was outraged to learn about the incident, and that the Government of Vietnam had gone back on its promise to change its human rights record- a promise Triet made with President Bush this past June," said Sanchez.

The two leaders have expressed the importance of continuing to make progress in the bilateral human rights dialogue and reaffirmed that it should be conducted in a comprehensive, constructive and results-oriented manner.

"The Government of Vietnam should be held accountable for their actions," urged Sanchez. "As a trading partner with the United States they must comply with human rights standards."

Sanchez, an outspoken advocate for human rights led congressional efforts in opposing Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007. Since then, Vietnamese authorities have launched the worst crackdown on human rights activists in twenty years. Sanchez also continues to support the reinstatement of Vietnam to the list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC), a designation for countries that have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom." Vietnam was taken off the CPC list last year by the Bush administration despite many warnings.

Attached is the text of the letter.

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July 24, 2007

His Excellency

President Triet

c/o Embassy of Vietnam

1233 20th Street, NW #400

Washington, DC 20036

Dear President Triet:

I am writing to express my serious disappointment regarding the treatment of the peaceful protesters in Saigon on July 18, 2007. It is my understanding that approximately 1,500 Vietnamese police were dispatched to break up a peaceful sit-in of 1,700 peasants. I have seen reports that approximately 30 peasants were severely injured through acts of violence by the police.

As a Member of Congress who represents a sizable Vietnamese-American community, I am very concerned about these reports of police violence at a peaceful sit-in. I am especially concerned given that you recently visited with President Bush on June 22 and he expressed to you the importance of human rights in the relationship between the United States and Vietnam. Specifically, President Bush stated during your joint press conference that he had said the following to you:

I also made it very clear that in order for relations to grow deeper that it's important for our friends to have a strong commitment to human rights and freedom and democracy. I explained my strong belief that societies are enriched when people are allowed to express themselves freely or worship freely.

This statement regarding the importance of human rights to the United States is a follow-up to the joint press release from yourself and President Bush on November 17, 2006. The release again mentioned the importance of human rights:

President Bush explained the National Security Strategy of the United States, which stresses the importance to world peace and stability of the development in every country of full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. President Triet apprised President Bush of recently promulgated laws and regulations on religious freedom that are to be implemented in all localities of Vietnam. The two leaders also noted the importance of continuing to make progress in the bilateral human rights dialogue and reaffirmed that it should be conducted in a comprehensive, constructive and results-oriented manner.

Given the discussion of the importance of human rights at your November 2006 and June 2007 meetings with President Bush, I am disappointed and disturbed by the reports of police brutality in Saigon on July 18. I would like to see the Government of Vietnam pay serious attention to human rights. The continued reports of human rights violations in Vietnam in the recent months are failing to convince the people of the United States that Vietnam meets the human rights standards expected of trading partners and members of the international community.

I would like to hear from you directly why these violent actions were taken by the police against peaceful protestors.

Respectfully,

Loretta Sanchez

Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State

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