

H.E. Pham Minh Chinh  
Prime Minister of Viet Nam  
16 Le Hong Phong Street  
Ba Dinh District  
Ha Noi, Viet Nam  
June XX, 2022

Freedom of religion advocates call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of this month's global summit to promote freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in Washington, D.C., we, the undersigned organizations and individuals, are writing to call for the immediate and unconditional release of religious prisoner of conscience Nguyễn Bắc Truyển.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyển is a legal expert and Hoa Hao Buddhist who has devoted his life to promoting the rights and freedoms of some of the most vulnerable people in Vietnam, including marginalized religious communities, land grabbing victims, and families of prisoners of conscience.

In 2004, Truyển was the first entrepreneur in Vietnam to voluntarily introduce social compliance and gender equality standards in his two companies, where he also provided free legal assistance to victims of land grabbing. In 2006 he was arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in prison followed by two years' mandatory supervision by local officials. After his release in 2010, he joined the Vietnamese Political and Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, which assists prisoners and their families. From 2014 until his arrest in 2017, he coordinated assistance for disabled veterans in a program of the Catholic Redemptorist Bureau for Justice and Peace in Ho Chi Minh City. Despite years of harassment, forced eviction and violent assault in retaliation for his peaceful activities, Truyển remained committed to improving the lives of marginalized and vulnerable citizens.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyển was arbitrarily arrested by Vietnamese police on July 30, 2017 in Ho Chi Minh City and held incommunicado at B-14 Detention Center in Hanoi for six months. He was not allowed to meet with his defense counsel until two weeks before his trial on April 5, 2018, when he was convicted of "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the government" and sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment followed by three years of mandatory supervision by local authorities.

Nguyen Bac Truyen is currently held at An Đầm Prison in Quang Nam province, 800 kilometers (500 miles) from his wife and family, despite repeated requests to be transferred to a prison closer to his home. When his mother passed away in November 2021, he was not allowed to have his sentence briefly suspended so that he could attend her funeral and perform his filial duty according to Vietnamese custom. Nguyen Bac Truyen suffers from several medical

ailments, including heart valve disease, gastritis, back pain, and swollen joints. Despite multiple requests, he has not had a proper medical examination since his arrest in 2017.

In August 2020, 68 parliamentarians in 28 countries called for Truyen's release as part of a global campaign led by the [International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief](#) and the [ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights](#).

The United Nations Secretary General, the [United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) and [six UN Special Rapporteurs](#) have sent numerous communications to the Vietnamese government regarding the [harsh persecution and harassment](#) of Truyen and his family, [official reprisals for their cooperation with UN human rights representatives](#), and Truyen's [arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, imprisonment](#), and mistreatment in custody.

Concerns about Truyen's arbitrary arrest and imprisonment have also been raised by the [European Union External Action Service](#), the [German Federal Commissioner on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid](#), the UK's [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#), and the [US State Department](#). Nguyen Bac Truyen has been adopted for targeted advocacy by the [All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief](#), members of the [German Bundestag](#), European Parliament, and [US Congress](#), and the [US Commission on International Religious Freedom](#).

In a [September 2020 report](#), the UN Secretary General raised concerns about Truyen's worsening health and lack of proper medical care in prison: "Since his arrest in July 2017, Mr. Nguyen Bac Truyen has reportedly not had a proper medical examination, faces restrictions of food and medical supplies, and his health condition has deteriorated. A petition on 18 January 2020 to the Board of Supervisors at An Diem prison requesting a medical check reportedly remains unanswered."

We believe that the charges against Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển are completely without foundation and that he has been targeted for his peaceful defense of human rights. Furthermore, we note that the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển is a violation of several articles in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Vietnam has acceded to, including Article 18 (right to freedom of religion or belief), Article 7 (freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment), Article 9 (right to liberty and security of the person and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention), and Article 14 (right to equality before the law; the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and to have a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal established by law).

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, call for the immediate and unconditional release of Nguyễn Bắc Truyển, and a complete cessation of all forms of harassment against him and his family.

Sincerely,