

Helen Nguyen

My name is Helen Nguyen. I am a US citizen and have resided in Orange County, California for 37 years. For 19 years, I have worked at the University Medical Center as a Surgical Registered Nurse. Michael Phuong Nguyen and I have been married since 2002 and we have 4 daughters together. I have served in surgical missions in Vietnam helping misfortunate children with cleft lips and palate since 2016. I also play an active role in my community and church.

Over a year ago, I said good-bye to my husband and wished him a great vacation in Hong Kong and Vietnam. I expected to greet him on his flight home three weeks later, but I didn't expect that our initial goodbyes would be final ones. I was devastated to find out through social media that he was detained by the Vietnamese Government on July 7, 2018 for investigation of Article 109 (Activities Against People's Government).

On June 24, 2019, he was sentenced for 12 years imprisonment in Vietnam for a dubious verdict. A lifetime learning to cope with loss, and still - nothing could ever prepare me for the loss of my own family. Just 12 months ago, Michael Phuong Nguyen was my husband, the father of my 4 daughters. Now, he's gone. Imagine the emptiness and pain one feels when they've lost someone they truly loved. Imagine the confusion and frustration for children whose parents one day 'disappear'. These are the struggles shared by all families torn apart through the human rights violations of corrupt governments.

My husband, like many others, has been detained by the Vietnamese government to do their bidding in systematically controlling and oppressing their own people. This flagrant disregard for human rights needs must not be ignored. The United States, a country founded on the preservation of personal freedoms and civil liberties, should use its position as a global power to hold violators accountable for their inability to ensure citizens basic human rights. The United Nations, a pioneer of human rights law, should ensure all members enforce a reasonable human rights standard and penalize those who don't.