

STATEMENT OF DOAN THI HONG ANH

JUNE 17, 2015

Translated by Mr. Tony Tran

Honorable Congressmen,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Doan Thi Hong Anh, the widow of Mr. Nguyen Thanh Nam, the Con Dau parishioner who was tortured to death that you have been aware in the US Congress hearing August 18, 2010.

After the brutal police crackdown at the Con Dau Parish cemetery May 4, 2010 and especially after the painful death of my husband by the torture of the local militias, the government found every ways to prevent me from telling the truth about the real cause my husband's death.

I had to close all doors and hid in my house for months, before find a way to escape to Thailand to protect my children and my own life. We were accepted as refugee status and resettled in the US less than a year ago.

I am honor to be here today to say thank you to the Congress and the US Government for the concern and support for my family and my parish in Con Dau the last five years during the fight for justice and protect our Parish existence.

It is because of the strong voice from the Congress, especially from you, Mr. Chairman, has brought my family and more than 100 victims from Con Dau to freedom the last two years.

Your works and your efforts have changed many lives, including thousands of Vietnamese refugees in other humanitarian programs that you sponsored over the years. You are truly the Champion of Human Rights. You are our hero and we are deeply grateful for that.

And I would like to confirm one more time the cause of my husband's death, not because I want to recall that painful memory, but to help prevent the police torture that are still happening every day in Vietnam.

The religious persecution policy of the communist government in Vietnam is exposing very obviously with the persecution in Con Dau. They have used every means, from intimidation, harassment, beatings, torture, imprisonment to land expropriation by force, to take over the land and wipe out a historical and all-catholic parish.

I've witnessed and myself a victim of so many times being intimidated to sign the agreement to move out without giving us the minimum right to stay around the church to continue with our religious activities.

Con Dau is only one of hundreds of religious persecutions that have happening in Vietnam, especially in the far away areas. I would like to give examples:

- In the Diocese of Kontum, Central Vietnam, in January 17, 2015, the government ordered to dismantle the temporary chapel of the Dak Jak Parish, and expelled the Chaplain from

this parish of more than 5000 parishioners. In March of this year, the government of Dak To district campaigned to dismantle 22 temporary chapels in the district, also with the reason of not being recognized by the government.

- In the Diocese of Hung Hoa, Northern Vietnam, the province governments of Lai Chau, Dien Bien and Son La, in the last 70 years (under communism), never allow to establish any chapel at any mission stations in these provinces, or permit Priests to come celebrate Mass per the demand of thousand catholic in these areas.
- In the Diocese of Vin, a diocese with more than 500 thousands catholic in Central Vietnam, the parish of My Yen, Tam Toa, Con Cuong and many other mission stations in the provinces of Quang Binh, Nghe An, are still facing many difficulties in their religious activities because the non-recognitions of the local government.

In reality, the freedom of religion in Vietnam has not been respected as the statement from the UN Special Rapporteur (Heiner Bielefeldt) after his visit in Vietnam July 2014. The government have covered up or turned away from multiple violations in many places.

In summary, I call on you to continue raising your concern and pressure Vietnam government to respect religious freedom. Strong US and international pressure is necessary and makes a difference, as in the case of Con Dau.

Con Dau Parish is still standing even though battered and reduced in sized, after so many persecutions and forced expropriations. The decision on resolving the Con Dau issue is still on the hand of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung since September last year. I call on you to request the Prime Minister to resolve the issue reasonably and fairly.

I also call on the Congress to pass the Vietnam Human Rights Act and incorporate human rights conditions into the TTP negotiation with Vietnam.

With such a human right profile, I call on the US State Department designate Vietnam as CPC, to force them to improve human rights genuinely, for our 90 million fellow countrymen to have opportunity to live as a human being and enjoy freedom like me today.

Thank you,

God Bless America

Doan Thi Hong Anh

Washington DC June 17, 2015

