

Brotherhood for Democracy
Anthony Le
Testimony before the United States Congress
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TESTIMONY REGARDING THE CRACKDOWN OF BROTHERHOOD FOR DEMOCRACY IN VIETNAM

Dear:

- Members and Senators of the United States Congress
- The Government of the United States
- Distinguished guests including the media, organizations concerned about the human rights situation in Vietnam

My name is Anthony Le, a member of the Brotherhood For Democracy (BFD). I am here today, to speak on the ongoing crackdown by Vietnamese authorities on BFD members over the past five years.

The BFD was established on April 24, 2013 as there was a need for a democratic society and sustainable development in Vietnam. Today, we have more than 100 members across all regions of Vietnam including members from around the world.

Our goal is to:

- Promote Democracy in Vietnam
- Develop civil society and disseminate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Support other civil society groups through various projects

1. Our previous work includes:

- The launch of the BFD met the needs of those who wanted to promote human rights and democracy in Vietnam. These are the values of many Vietnamese and since the founding of the BFD; hundreds of people have joined the organization with more than 32 members working full time and part time.
- Over the four years, we have established a solid structure and various working groups to organize 16 trainings courses on civil society both online and offline with more than 250 participants. Face to face trainings involved more than 100 attendees who developed skills and knowledge regarding human rights
- Supporting workers to demand for labour rights
- Supporting fishermen to demand for environmental justice and file lawsuits against Formosa following the environmental disaster which left tons of dead fish washing up ashore across 6 provinces in central Vietnam in April 2016.
- Supporting land rights petitioners and victims of government land grabs

2. Ongoing harassment from Vietnamese authorities

Given that Vietnam is an only one party state, the Communist Party of Vietnam does not allow civil society groups to operate without their knowledge or supervision. Because of this, it is necessary for Vietnamese authorities to stop the activities of various civil society groups. This has happened to the BFD. Our organization has been harassed from the very beginning:

- 2.1. May 2014: 3 members: Nguyen Nam Trung, Pham Minh Vu and Nguyen Thi Phuong Anh were arrested for attending a protest organized by workers in Dong Nai Province.
- 2.2. November 2014: Truong Minh Duc and other youth accompanying him were physically attacked with severe injuries after supporting workers demanding for labour rights in Binh Duong Province.
- 2.3. December 6, 2015: Nguyen Van Dai and Ly Quang Son, members of the BFD, were attacked and beaten after facilitating a training on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in Nghe An
- 2.4. December 16, 2015: Vietnamese authorities arbitrarily arrested two BFD members Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thu Ha
- 2.5. October 2016: 8 BFD members in central Vietnam including: Nguyen Trung Truc, Mai Van Tam, Tran Thi Xuan, Nguyen Van Thanh, Nguyen Ngoc Lanh, Nguyen Van Giap, Vo The Truong and Que were detained and severely beaten, had their possessions confiscated and clothing removed before being deserted in Huong Son Forest in Ha Tinh Province. All required medical treatment for the next 12 months.
- 2.6. February 2017: Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton, President of the BFD, was assaulted and beaten around the feet with an iron bar, still unable to walk properly.
- 2.7. From the end of July until August 2017: 7 members and 1 former members of the BFD Pham Van Troi, Nguyen Trung Ton, Truong Minh Duc, Nguyen Trung Truc, Tran Thi Xuan, Nguyen Van Tuc, Vu Van Hung and Nguyen Bac Truyen (former member) were arbitrarily arrested.
9 members and 1 former member of the BFD were unlawfully detained between December 2015 and the end of 2017 for **“activities aimed at overthrowing the state”** according to Article 79 of the Vietnamese penal code. Many have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms.
- 2.8. The remaining members:
 - Are all being threatened and issued arrest warrants, with ongoing harassment of family members
 - 6 members have had to flee to Thailand to seek asylum
 - Some members have had to flee their homes for the past year, with their closed ones being continually harassed by authorities

- I personally have far from home from August 2015 till now, I am lucky to have safety here in the United States but my wife and children continue to be harassed, my wife has been attacked by local police within the confines of her home and my children have been detained while travelling to school to question them about me. Police have installed 5 cameras around my home in Saigon and anyone who approaches my home is questioned immediately after. No one has come to my home over the past 2 years.

3. Conclusions/recommendations

On behalf of the BFD, I would like to suggest the following:

The United States Congress and Government call on the Vietnamese government to end its crackdown on the BFD and unconditionally and immediately release all of our members as well as all prisoners of conscience, dissidents and religious activists. Call on authorities to stop harassing and intimidating Vietnamese activists.

We hope the United Nations and various NGOs, media and individuals in Vietnam and around the world to support the BFD as well as the democracy movement in Vietnam.

Members of the BFD as well as their families express their ongoing struggles and hope there will be a brighter future for the BFD as well as for all Vietnamese people.

Washington DC
June 5, 2018
Anthony Le