

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

September 9, 2023

8 Vietnamese civil society organizations urge President Joe Biden to address 03 cases of wrongful death sentences

Dear President Biden:

We hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. We write to you today as civil society organizations and concerned citizens of Vietnam, deeply committed to the principles of justice, equality, and human rights that the world stands for. We would like to draw your attention to an urgent matter that deserves your consideration during your upcoming trip to Vietnam on September 10, 2023.

We need your resolute voice to address the pressing issue of wrongful death penalty cases in Vietnam during your visit to Vietnam. Specifically, we implore you to call for an immediate halt to the imminent execution of **Nguyen Van Chuong**, an action that authorities may execute at any moment.

Furthermore, it is imperative that Vietnam conducts a thorough and immediate legal review of the three cases involving **Nguyen Van Chuong, Le Van Manh, and Ho Duy Hai**, aiming to exonerate them from their wrongful death sentences. These individuals have endured decades of imprisonment on death row for crimes the Vietnamese legal system has failed to substantiate with any credible evidence.

In recent years, the issue of wrongful convictions and the death penalty in Vietnam has garnered international attention. Wrongful convictions share disturbingly similar characteristics in Vietnam, often occurring in rural areas and disproportionately affecting the poor and less educated members of society. The alarming trend of police brutality and coerced confessions, coupled with a lack of effective legal counsel, has led to miscarriages of justice in Vietnam's legal system. Perhaps most distressing is the fact that many individuals have been sentenced to

death based on little to no credible evidence, relying solely on confessions obtained through force and torture.

The need for legal reforms in Vietnam is real and urgent. One of them is the wrongful conviction and death sentence of Nguyen Van Chuong, and you can halt his imminent execution.

Nguyen Van Chuong was convicted of murder in 2008 and sentenced to death despite claims of torture during his detention and a lack of concrete evidence against him. Chuong had several alibi witnesses that the authorities ignored and failed to bring up at his criminal trial and the appellate hearing so that they could convict, sentence him to death, and uphold that decision.

On August 4, 2023, Chuong's family received a notification from the court to collect his body, indicating that his execution was imminent. In response, both Chuong's family and the public have passionately petitioned the President of Vietnam to halt his execution and initiate a thorough review of his case. An impressive show of support has emerged, with nearly 6,000 individuals signing this petition, 13 international human rights organizations issuing an open letter demanding a halt, and the U.N. Human Rights Office calling upon Vietnam to reexamine his case. Regrettably, the government has remained silent for over a month, causing grave concern for Chuong's life.

We would like to bring two other wrongful cases to your attention involving two young men who have been convicted, sentenced, and incarcerated on death row for decades. Their stories highlight the critical issues within Vietnam's justice system and underscore the importance of addressing these injustices:

Ho Duy Hai: Ho Duy Hai's case epitomizes the systemic flaws in Vietnam's legal process. He was accused of robbery and murder in 2008, convicted on dubious grounds, and sentenced to death. Subsequent investigations have raised serious questions about his guilt, including the lack of physical evidence and the murder weapons. Despite this, Ho Duy Hai continues to languish on death row, awaiting an execution that may not be just.

Le Van Manh: Le Van Manh's story is another tragic testament to the urgency of reform. Accused of rape and murder in 2005, he was swiftly convicted and sentenced to death. Like the others, his case has been marred by allegations of coerced confessions and a lack of due process.

As the President of the United States, your visit to Vietnam provides an invaluable opportunity to shed light on these grave injustices and advocate for legal reforms. By addressing these cases and raising concerns about the broader issues of wrongful convictions and the death penalty, you can significantly impact the lives of those unjustly imprisoned and help advance the cause of justice in Vietnam.

We respectfully request that you consider including the cases of Nguyen Van Chuong, Ho Duy Hai, and Le Van Manh in your discussions with Vietnamese leaders. Furthermore, we urge you to emphasize the pressing need for legal reforms in Vietnam to ensure justice, equality, and fairness in every trial. The United States has a longstanding commitment to human rights and the rule of law, and your advocacy on this issue would be a powerful testament to these universal values.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We hope your leadership will bring about positive change and contribute to a more just and equitable world.

Sincerely,

Civil Society Forum

(Diễn đàn Xã hội Dân sự)

Independent Writers Association

(Ban vận động Văn đoàn Độc lập)

Lập Quyền Dân

Lê Hiếu Đằng Club

(Câu lạc bộ Lê Hiếu Đằng)

Legal Initiatives for Vietnam

(Sáng kiến Pháp lý Việt Nam)

Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh Club

(Câu lạc bộ Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh)

Phan Tây Hồ Club

(Câu lạc bộ Phan Tây Hồ)

Vietnamese Advocates for Change

(Nhóm Làm việc vì Một Việt Nam Thay đổi)