

The 2006 Appeal of 116 Democracy Advocates For Rights to Freedom of Political Association in Vietnam

To All Vietnamese Compatriots Inland and Overseas,
To The World Community of Advocates for Democracy in Vietnam,

In joining so many selfless individuals who are fighting for democracy in Viet Nam, we, the representatives of hundreds of democracy activists inside Vietnam, hereby signed this documents to raise our unanimous voice on behalf of the Vietnamese people that: The state of our nation has been, is, and continues to be placed in danger by the totalitarian, dictatorial Communist Party of Viet Nam. We strongly support and call for political activities that are beneficial to our nation, and promoting all human and civil rights which all genuine democracies must recognize and protect, including the rights to form political parties and hold political activities. Our appeal is based on the following foundations:

1 – The International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, approved by the United Nation on December 16th, 1966, and joined by Vietnam on September 24th, 1982, stated in **Article 5.2**: “Shall not limit or remove any basic human rights that were recognized or existed in a country member of this treaty”; and in **Article 21**: “All citizens ... have the right and opportunity to (a) participate in the administration of social welfare directly or through the elected representative; (b) election and candidacy in honest election, equal and confidential voting to ensure the voters to express opinions freely”.

2- The Constitution of the Social Republic Of Viet Nam stated in **Article 3**: “the government guarantee and ceaselessly promote the ownership rights of the people in all aspects”; in **Article 11**: “the citizen exercise his ownership ... by participating in the government’s works...protecting people's law-binding rights and interests ...organizing community activities”; in **Article 50**: “In the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, human rights in the political, civic, economic, cultural, and social areas are respected”; in **Article 53**: “Citizen has the rights to participate in the management of the government and society, participate in the discussion of common issues facing the nation or local community”; in **Article 69**: “Citizen has the right to The Freedom of Speech...Freedom of Assembly, **Freedom of Association**, and the Right to Protest ...”

3- The Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, stated in **Article 73**: “The present keener sense of human dignity has given rise in many parts of the world to attempts to bring about a politico-juridical order which will give better protection to the rights of the person in public life. These include **the right freely to meet and form associations**, the right to express one's own opinion and to profess one's religion both publicly and privately. The protection of the rights of a person is indeed a necessary condition so that citizens, individually or collectively, can **take an active part in the life and government of the state** ... However,

those political systems, prevailing in some parts of the world are to be reproved which hamper civic or religious freedom, victimize large numbers through avarice and political crimes, and divert the exercise of authority from the service of the common good to the interests of one or another faction or of the rulers themselves.”; in **Article 75**: “All Christians must be aware of their own specific vocation within the political community....They must recognize the legitimacy of different opinions ...they must take action against any form of injustice and tyranny, against arbitrary domination by an individual or a political party and any intolerance....(because) Political parties, for their part, must promote those things which in their judgment are required for the common good; it is never allowable to give their interests priority over the common good.”

4- Current global reality: A great majority of countries in the world today have pluralistic political system, with healthy open competitions through elections and egalitarian, democratic activities in the political arena. The winning party becomes the administration, and the losing the opposition. They check, balance, and therefore depend on each other. Meanwhile, the 3 branches -- legislative, executive, judiciary -- remain separate, and the independent Press, military, religions, all work for common good of the nation. **All citizens with talents and willingness to serve in these countries have the opportunities to work for the common good and contribute to the country through political parties.** It is these contributions that help develop the economy, stabilize society, and guarantee human rights in these countries; all citizens have opportunities to advance, all communities have the environment to grow, and all social problems are addressed promptly.

5- Reality of today Vietnam: The Communist Party of Viet Nam has ruled dictatorially for more than half a century over North Vietnam, and more than 30 years over the entire country. Despites being just one political party among others, but its total submission to Marxist-Leninism has driven the Communist Party totalitarianism, controlling every aspect of the lives of individuals as well as the public, including people's thoughts, faiths, emotions, economy, politics, culture, laws, etc. Marxist-Leninism also dictates atheism in spirituality, monopoly in political power, and socialism in economics as the absolute truth to be imposed on all citizens.

The Communist Party of Viet Nam, therefore, has been poisoning and is suppressing the conscience of the people, turning them into masses of obedient servants to the Party through its exclusive control of information and education. It destroyed other parties who had fought along its side against the colonists, and is now forbidding any other parties to exist under Article 4 of its 1992 Constitution; The Party has been persecuting religions, turning the courts, the National Assembly, the government, the Media, the police, the military, and even religious organizations into its exclusive apparatus. The Party has been placing all the laws, from the Constitution to ordinances, decrees, directives, orders, etc. under the exclusive use of the Party, the Politburo, or to be exact, a few individuals at the

top of the Party hierarchy. It has been managing a wild and corrupted capitalist economy, crippled by the blind, callous, and awkward insistence on maintaining the "direction toward Socialism".

As a result, Vietnam is now a state of corrupted collective conscience, degraded human characters, stagnated educational system, dishonest public communication, whimsical legal system, chaotic society, abusive government officials, and widespread corruption; a state where the masses are robbed of their properties and labor, under constant threats of losing their jobs and livelihood; a state of general helplessness and anger; of youths without faith, ideal, or hope; of religions being infiltrated and manipulated; and an overseas compatriot community being disenchanted and distant; a state with borders being violated and constantly threatened, and a regime infamous for its backwardness and authoritarianism. Vietnam today is a nation without respect from the world community, having fallen behind neighboring countries by hundreds of years in certain aspects, constantly standing at the bottoms of the lists of nations' welfare yet almost always appearing in international lists of rogue countries. All corrective actions by the Communist Party are piecemeal, half-hearted, merely for the temporary relief of the public outrage, and for a cover-up from the eyes of the international community. No problem is being solved at the roots. **All of these conditions have the same origin -- the monopoly of power, and worse, by a Marxist Communist party !**

Facing these tragedy and danger as well as the predictable results of the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam of maintaining blind adherence to the wrongfule Marxist-Leninism and the bankrupt socialism while allowing its office-holding members unlimited economic activities, we earnestly join our voices in:

1- Demanding the Communist Party of Vietnam and its government to abolish Article 4 of the 1992 Constitution, asserting power belonging to the CPV exclusively and eternally. Such monstrous and illogical assertion cannot be found in any constitution in the world, except for the USSR's which had been tossed by the Russian people. The 1992 Constitution must be replaced by a more civilized and democratic document. Next, the CPV must rescind its control over the National Assembly, courts, government, military, police, schools, hospitals, companies, manufacturers, organizations, etc.

2- Inviting all democratic political parties that have been operating in secrecy in Viet Nam to appear openly. Boldly declare your place before the people on your own initiative. Do not wait for "permission" from the dictatorial communist regime. It is illogical for one political party to grant permissions to others to exist. Come and compete with the Communist party as equals. Do not accept the less-than-50% ratio in Congress that the Communist party may set up as decoration for a fake democracy. Let the people decide the ratio through an free, fair, and transparent election. Currently, hundreds of

individuals are publicly fighting for democracy by peaceful means and that is enough to put the communist authorities in awkward position before the international community. Therefore, now is the right time for the democratic parties to publicly face the Communist party who is sinking deeper and deeper into crises with no escape route.

3- Calling all enlightened members of the Communist party to act decisively by separating yourself immediately from this political entity which has betrayed your ideal, taken advantage of your sufferings, and committed crimes systematically for almost a century as being pointed out in the Resolution 1481 of the European Congress, dated January 25th, 2006. This is the only way for you to continue adhering to your patriotic ideal, serving the people, and restoring your honor before the people and history.

4- Calling all compatriots across the nation to defend, support and join the newly formed non-communist parties. In doing so, we would liberate ourselves from the dictatorial yoke that has been imposed on our people for over 60 years, and exercise our civil and political rights to foster an environment in which our country will develop like any other country with a pluralistic political system.

5- Asking all members of the Armed Forces and the Public Security to recognize that the true purpose of these entities is to serve the people and the common good. These forces, therefore, should always stay out of any political disputes and refuse to become private apparatus of any parties. Do not let the Communist party order you to suppress people who simply insist on exercising their rights. Among them is the right to a pluralistic political system.

6- Calling all intellectuals and clergies, who have well understood the tragedy of dictatorship and the benefits of pluralistic democracy, to take great effort in educating people, especially the young, on the ever more urgent subjects of politics and the role of citizens. Please use your influence and knowledge to guide, support, and defend those citizens who enter the realm of politics, “a difficult art yet at the same time noble” (Second Vatican Council Pastoral Constitution, Article 75).

7- Calling all overseas Vietnamese, governments and international organizations around the world to support by any ways and means so that political parties in Viet Nam can be formed and operate openly. The people of Vietnam would then enjoy a free political environment as in the rest of the world. This effort is much more important and needed than pouring money through foreign loans and aids into the hands of a dictatorial government who will use these funding to maintain its power, increase its coffers, and leave the Vietnamese people with huge foreign debts as seen currently.

We pray for the blessing from the Almighty through the intercession of our ancestors who have been guiding generations of Lac Hong of the spirit of harmony and tolerance.

May the people of Vietnam be blessed in our common effort to break the yoke of dictatorship and build a pluralistic democracy for this is the only way to save our people.

From inside Vietnam, April 6th, 2006

1. Father G.B. Nguyễn Cao Lộc, Huế
2. Rev. PGHHTT Lê Quang Liêm, Sài Gòn
3. Father Têphanô Chân Tín, Sài Gòn
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5. Father F.X. Lê Văn Cao, Huế
6. Prof. Trần Khuê, Sài Gòn
7. Father Augustinô Hồ Văn Quý, Huế
8. Ret. Colonel Phạm Quê Dương, Hà Nội
9. Father Phêrô Nguyễn Hữu Giải, Huế
10. Rev. PGHHTT Nguyễn Văn Thơ, Đồng Tháp
11. Father Giuse Hoàng Cẩn, Huế
12. Rev. PGHHTT Lê Văn Sóc, Vĩnh Long
13. Venerable Thích Không Tánh, Sài Gòn
14. Writer Hoàng Tiến, Hà Nội
15. Father Gk Nguyễn Văn Hùng, Huế
16. Ret. Officer Trần Dũng Tiến, Hà Nội
17. Father G.B. Lê Văn Nghiêm, Huế
18. Ret. Major Vũ Kính, Hà Nội
19. Father Tadêô Nguyễn Văn Lý, Huế
20. Teacher Nguyễn Khắc Toàn, Hà Nội
21. Father Giuse Cái Hồng Phượng, Huế
22. Prof. Nguyễn Chính Kết, Sài Gòn
23. Pastor Nguyễn Hồng Quang, Sài Gòn
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31. Father Giuse Trần Văn Quý, Huế
32. Vũ Thuý Hà, Hà Nội
33. Father Phêrô Phan Văn Lợi, Huế
34. Bùi Kim Ngân, Hà Nội
35. Father Phaolô Ngô Thanh Sơn, Huế
36. Dr. Nguyễn Xuân An, Huế
37. Teacher Đặng Hoài Anh, Huế
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44. Teacher Lê Cẩn, Huế
45. Teacher Nguyễn Thị Ngãi
46. Teacher Nguyễn Viết Cử, Quảng Ngãi
47. Poet Đặng Quốc Cường, Huế
48. Writer Nguyễn Đắc Cường, Phan Thiết
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61. Architect Trần Việt Hải, Vũng Tàu
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 69. Teacher Văn Đinh Hoàng, Huế
 71. Teacher Lê Thu Minh Hùng, Sài Gòn
 73. Teacher Lê Thị Thanh Huyền, Huế
 75. Poet Mai Thu Hương, Hải Phòng
 77. PTs Nguyễn Ngọc Kế, Huế
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