

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

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STATEMENT ON THE ANNUAL U.S.-VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE IN HANOI IN MAY 2008

We, the Vietnam Human Rights Network have followed with great interest the annual U.S.-Vietnam human rights dialogue in Hanoi in May 2008. We appreciate the US government's commitment to pursue the noble task of promoting and defending human rights of Vietnamese people in Vietnam. We express our gratitude to Mr. David Kramer, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor for raising concerns about the lack of freedom of expression and the plight of two reporters imprisoned for speaking out against government corruption. However, we are extremely surprised and frustrated by the Assistant Secretary's remark quoted by VOA on May 30, 2008 stating that "in the area of religious freedom we have seen progress."

In fact, the situation of religious freedom in Vietnam continues to be a major concern of Vietnamese people and human rights organizations. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, in its 2008 report stated that "Severe Religious Freedom Violations Continue" in Vietnam and recommended Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reinstate Vietnam to the list of "Countries of Particular Concern." On the occasion of the celebration of Vesak sponsored by the UN in Vietnam, Human Rights Watch's representative in Asia affirmed that "It is a travesty that Vietnam has been allowed to host a major international Buddhist celebration while its state policy is political control of every religious organization - Vietnam continues to systematically imprison and persecute independent Buddhists as well as followers of other religions."

We believe that by means of constructive dialogue, positive reform can come forth, but it is only in respect of the truth that dialogue can be built and developed. We regret that the annual U.S.-Vietnam human rights dialogue in Hanoi in May 2008 did not achieve its ultimate goals.

California, June 04, 2008



Nguyen Thanh Trang
President