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April 8, 2009

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0G2

Re. Persecution of Lawyer Le Tran Luat

Dear Sir:

I'm writing to request your intervention in the case of a human-rights lawyer who is being subject to persecution by the Vietnamese Communist government.

The lawyer in question, Mr. Le Tran Luat, had agreed to defend 8 Catholics of Thai Ha District in Hanoi who participated in the prayer sessions for the return of the Catholic Church's land illegally confiscated by the government. In addition, he also agreed to defend, free of charge, some political dissidents who were involved in a peaceful movement for democracy and freedom in Vietnam, including Messrs. Nguyen Xuan Nghia, Pham Thanh Nghien, Pham Van Troi, and Vu Hung who have been detained without trial for several months.

In response to Mr. Luat's actions, Vietnamese authorities at present subject him to a plan of constant harassments including the following incidents:

- On February 25, 2009, his office in Saigon was searched by the police who took away his photocopiers and computers to execute a decree in favour of a competing law firm in a private dispute;
- On March 3, 2009, he was prevented from taking a flight from Saigon to Hanoi to meet his clients. Subsequently he was detained for interrogation at the police station for the whole day.
- His associates Hung and Dat and his assistant Ta Phong Tan were also summoned by the police for questioning. Specifically, Ms. Ta Phong Tan was interrogated 10 times over 10 consecutive days.
- On March 25, 2009, the police delivered to his office a notice of termination of its operation permit. Consequently, he had to suspend all the services that he had committed to his clients and to return the retention fees that he had received.

- Since then, his office has been kept under watch by a group of about 20 secret police agents, and everyone who visited this office was searched and interrogated afterward.
- In order to prepare for his eventual disbaring, the government has mounted a vicious campaign in the state media to denounce him as a crook and a criminal. The Investigation Bureau has submitted to the Ministry of Justice a request to withdraw his legal practice permit.

All the above incidents point to the possibility that Mr. Luat will be prevented from practicing his profession as a lawyer and will be subject to detention and eventual imprisonment.

The persecution of Mr. Luat by the Vietnamese government is an insult to Canada's commitment to help Vietnam *improve the administration of justice and increase knowledge of, and access to, the legal system* in the current \$12 million legal development assistance project. I would therefore like to suggest that you suspend it until Vietnamese authorities show their own respect of justice by ending all their harassments against this courageous lawyer.

Trusting that our request will receive a favourable response from you, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Ut Ngo
President, Vietnamese Canadian Federation

c.c. The Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism