

Mr. Speaker, Vietnam is increasingly integrated into the global economy; but to be considered a friend of our Nation, it must protect human rights and provide its people political and religious freedom. We all wish this future for Vietnam, and we hope there will be more positive results of our continued efforts to dialogue with the leaders of the people of Vietnam.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this proposed bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me begin by thanking my good friend and colleague, Mr. FALCOMA, for his leadership on human rights. We have worked together on those issues around the world. We have served on the Human Rights Committee for years, and he has been one of those champions with whom I am just so glad to associate myself. And I want to thank Mr. LANTOS, the chairman of our committee, for bringing this bill to the floor and express my strong gratitude to him and to Ranking Member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN and to the leadership for posting this bill for consideration today.

Mr. Speaker, Vietnam has long been known as a major violator of human rights. Sadly, in recent months the human rights situation in Vietnam has deteriorated and become substantially worse, and a new ugly wave of brutal repression has been launched by Hanoi. Over the last couple of months, some of the bravest champions of democracy have been dragged into court and sent to the gulag for simply promoting human rights and justice and free trade unions.

I would note to my colleagues that the House of Representatives has gone on record time and time again condemning and deploring these violations, but this is a new wave that comes on the heels of PNTR, as well as the WTO accession by the Vietnamese Government.

I would note that on May 2 of this year, this House unanimously adopted a resolution that I sponsored which called on the Government of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release Father Nguyen Van Ly, Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, and other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. During consideration of that resolution, Mr. Speaker, I noted that I had been to Vietnam on many human rights trips. I have chaired several hearings on the issue of human rights in Vietnam and have been joined by my friend Mr. FALCOMA, Mr. ROYCE and others in those hearings. But on one of the most recent trips, I actually met with Father Ly, who was just sentenced to 8 years in prison. Just sentenced. I also met with Nguyen Van Dai and about 60 other human rights activists and religious leaders and peo-

ple who are pressing for reform in that country. And one by one those individuals are being caught in this dragnet.

I was struck when I met with these individuals, Mr. Speaker, by how extraordinarily generous, compassionate, talented, and kind hearted these people are. They are extraordinary. They are Vietnam's best and brightest and certainly their bravest. I was amazed at how they harbored no malice, no hate towards the government that hates them, nor do they hate the government leaders. They only want a better future for their country. Each and every one of the people I met with is committed to peaceful, nonviolent reform.

I met with Father Ly when he was under house arrest, and he sounded just like the activists that I had met and spoken to during the dark years of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. My first human rights trip, I would note parenthetically, was in 1982 on behalf of Soviet refuzniks. It was like being right back there, *deja vu*, talking to these individuals just like back then, the Shcharanskys of this world or Vaclav Havel or Lech Walesa, people like the folks in Charter 77 in the Czech Republic who only wanted freedom, democracy, and human rights.

□ 1500

And none of them wanted violence. And these reformers of Vietnam want nothing whatsoever to do with violence. And yet, they are accused of slandering the state. To criticize an unjust policy is construed by the state to be slander. Father Ly has now been sentenced to 8 years, and that's in addition to the 14 years he had previously served in the Gulag on trumped-up charges.

Just days after the House adopted the Resolution 243 calling for a reversal of human rights violations, Nguyen Van Dai was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and 4 years of house arrest. Attorney Van Dai is a tenacious campaigner for human rights who uses the rule of law in a nonviolent manner to press his case.

On the same day that Mr. Van Dai was sentenced, another human rights lawyer, a labor activist, Le Thi Cong Nhan, received 4 years imprisonment and 3 years of house arrest from the same ruthless regime. She, too, punished for engaging in activities recognized internationally as protected human rights.

I've read the 2007 trial proceedings and the government sentencing record, which I intend to put into the RECORD. And I ask every Member to read that and to read it very carefully. It reads like a chilling chapter out of George Orwell's book, "1984."

At the trial, the presiding judge, Nguyen Huu Chinh, accused and condemned Dai of being a member of an Independent Trade Union. A member of the Communist party in Poland, Jaruzelski, accused Lech Walesa of that same thing, an independent trade union. That accusation carries with it a time in the Gulag in Vietnam today.

In Vietnam today, men and women are going to jail for very long periods of time for what the government calls "disseminating propaganda against the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

I point out to my colleagues that the day after the House passed the resolution on May 2, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom indicated in its annual report that the removal of Vietnam from the State Department's List of Countries of Particular Concern was premature based on the evidence that the current situation in the country has not allowed religious freedom. Again, it was part of an effort, I think, of suggesting that if they just got into the World Trade Organization, somehow they would matriculate from dictatorship to democracy. Regrettably, that has not happened. And we've seen a snapback to repression that is very, very severe, cruel, and very, very ugly.

The legislation before us, Mr. Speaker, would prohibit an increase in U.S. nonhumanitarian assistance to Vietnam unless the government makes substantial progress in the following areas: the release of political and religious prisoners; respect for religious freedom; allowing open access to the United States for our refugee program, because very often those who would like to become a part of that have to pay bribes to communist officials or they are simply detained and not allowed to apply; and respect for the rights of ethnic minority groups, including the Montagnard.

Beginning in fiscal year 2009, there would also be a need to show that neither any official of the government nor any government agency was complicit in the trafficking of human persons. The president may waive this restriction on assistance if he determines that the assistance would promote human rights or would otherwise be in the national interests of the U.S.

Other important provisions would authorize \$2 million of assistance in both 2008 and 2009 to support democracy in Vietnam, and approximately \$10 million over 2 years to overcome the jamming of Radio Free Asia by Vietnam. Let me tell my colleagues, they're jamming Radio Free Asia, jamming it, so the message that we think is so important simply cannot get through. And again, the only thing that any dictatorship needs anywhere to survive and prosper is a secret police, got that in Vietnam, and a control of the message, the propaganda. And by jamming Radio Free Asia, they preclude other voices, other opinions from reaching the people.

The bill would also extend U.S. refugee programs to Vietnamese who were previously eligible but were unable to apply for reasons beyond their control, like I said, like not wanting to pay bribes to Vietnamese officials.

Mr. Speaker, in November of 2006, pursuant to a boatload of assurances and solemn promises that the human