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Senator the Hon Marise Ann Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 1420
Parramatta, NSW 2150

January 1st 2022.

Dear Honourable Marise Payne,

I am writing to you as a concerned Australian citizen, a former refugee from communist-ruled Vietnam and currently Bishop of Parramatta who is deeply troubled by the recent conviction and imprisonment of one of Vietnam's best known human rights advocates Pham Doan Trang.

On December 14th 2021, she was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of disseminating anti-state propaganda. These charges stem from the release of human rights reports and publications authored by Ms Pham covering issues of good governance, women's empowerment, religious freedom and the environment.

According to Human Rights Watch, Vietnam's human rights record remains dire in all areas. Basic rights, including freedom of speech, press, association and religion are restricted. Human rights activists and bloggers such as Ms Pham face harassment, intimidation, assault and imprisonment, often based on bogus national security charges. As a religious leader with a particular interest in religious freedom in Vietnam, I myself have made several interventions in support of the victims of land seizures by the Vietnamese government.

Sadly, in Vietnam the judicial system is at the service of the one and only Communist Party. The so-called "People's Court" gave Ms Pham more time in prison than the seven to eight years prosecutors had requested. Such arbitrary

application of the rule of law is rightly condemned by human rights groups, journalist associations and even foreign embassies in Vietnam.

In a letter entitled “Just in case I am imprisoned” Ms Pham stated, “I don’t want freedom just for myself. I want freedom for Vietnam”. With these noble aspirations, I urge the Australian Government to condemn her conviction and call on the Vietnamese government to release Ms Pham.

In a truly democratic society, her prolific ideas and writings on issues of universal concern such as good governance, freedom and environmental sustainability should be admired and extolled rather than criminalized.

Australia has been a good friend and partner with the Vietnamese people. As a Vietnamese Australian, I am one of the living testaments to this friendship. I hope that Australia will continue to influence Vietnamese government to ensure its laws and actions are consistent with Vietnam’s international obligations and commitments.

Yours truly,



Vincent Long Van Nguyen

Bishop of Parramatta, Australia

Chair of Bishops Commission for Social Justice - Mission and Service

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference