

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 2019

The Honorable Mark A. Morgan,
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Acting Director Morgan,

We write to highlight our concerns regarding Vietnamese activist Ha Van Thanh. On May 12, 2018, Mr. Ha fled Vietnam, journeyed through several countries before arriving in the United States seeking political asylum. Mr. Ha has been involved in protests against the Formosa Corporation in Vietnam for the toxic spill in 2016, which created a major marine life disaster. Particularly, he assisted parishioners and priests of the Song Ngoc Parish near the Formosa Steel Plant in their marches to seek justice for fishermen and victims of the toxic spill, against the government's efforts to squash any dissents from the incident.

In 2016, the Formosa Corporation steel plant in Vung Ang, Ha Tinh Province, caused a massive marine life destruction with its hazardous waste discharge into the sea. This resulted in a massive fish kill and led to not only long-term contamination of the coastal waters but also an economic catastrophe for the surrounding coastal communities. The lack of response and transparency from the Vietnamese government and Formosa Corporation led to mass demonstrations and protests.

On February 14, 2017, parishioners of the Song Ngoc Parish traveled to the courthouse in Ky Anh District of Ha Tinh Province, where the Formosa office was located, to file complaints as victims of the disaster. Local police forces were ordered to prevent vehicles from reaching the destination, and community members chose to continue the journey on foot. At which point, the police forces were then dispatched to beat, detain, and interrogate participants. Individuals who aided the demonstrators, such as Hoang Duc Binh and Nguyen Nam Phong, have been arrested and jailed. Mr. Hoang was detained and eventually sentenced to 14 years in prison for helping parishioners prepare the formal complaint, planning public protests and related communications campaign, and the march to submit the complaint to the court. Mr. Nguyen, who helped with the planning and implementation of the projects and transporting nurses, food, and volunteers, was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison.

As for Mr. Ha Van Thanh, he led peaceful marches and offered protection to demonstrators and the priests. He has been beaten by authorities for his involvement. Since these protests, he has been monitored by the police and has been summoned 3 times to report to the police station for interrogation.

Mr. Ha fled Vietnam, traveled to Laos, Thailand, Cuba, Panama, then Mexico, and entered the U.S. at the southern port of entry. He is currently held at an immigration detention center in Chaparral, New Mexico.

He has applied for asylum and was denied. He appealed this decision and on May 10, 2019, his appeal was also denied. His lawyer is currently petitioning for a review of this decision. He is now facing imminent deportation.

Given Mr. Ha's history with local authorities, his involvement in peaceful demonstrations, the testimony from Father Nguyen Dinh Thuc of Song Ngoc Parish, as well as the treatment and imprisonment of fellow protestors, there is sufficient evidence to infer that he would be at great risk of persecution should he return to Vietnam.

Since the news of his detention and imminent deportation became public, support from the international community, human rights advocates, media, and the Vietnamese American community for Mr. Ha Van Thanh has been mounting. Mr. Ha's lawyer is in the process of filing petition for review of the Board of Immigration Appeals' decision. We respectfully urge that ICE halt any deportation proceedings at this time.

Sincerely,



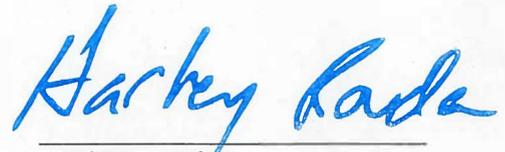
Alan Lowenthal
Vietnam Caucus Co-Chair



Zoe Lofgren
Vietnam Caucus Co-Chair



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Harley Rouda
Member of Congress