

Political and religious persecution are still the most obvious areas in Vietnam where international concern is warranted. Many prisoners remain incarcerated for the expression of their political and religious beliefs and have become symbolic of Vietnam's lack of respect for human rights. Among the most prominent are Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, Doan Viet Hoat and religious leaders such as Thich Quang Do. A number of other prominent writers, poets and journalists also remain imprisoned.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada continues to have concerns with the human rights situation in Vietnam. Vietnam has come under scrutiny in the ODA, human rights and democratic development review process and these considerations have been taken into account in the development of the ODA program. The current orientation is to work directly and pro-actively with the government of Vietnam to support administrative and legal reform.

We have continued to make regular high-level representations to Vietnamese authorities to encourage greater respect for human rights and about specific cases of interest to us, though without palpable results in the case of prisoners of conscience.

There is a declining international consensus to press Vietnam on human rights issues and United Nation's resolutions on Vietnam have been dropped since 1994. Canada has continued to voice its concern about the human rights situation in Vietnam in relevant international fora, such as in country statements at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.