



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Vietnam: Human Rights

SPEECH

Thursday, 19 March 2015

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Questioner
Speaker Hayes, Chris, MP

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Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:13): Yesterday I attended the human rights rally that was organised by the Vietnamese Community in Australia to raise awareness of the widespread human rights violations that are currently occurring in Vietnam. More than 200 people from communities across New South Wales and the ACT assembled outside Parliament House. Having worked very closely with the Vietnamese community over many years now, I know that human rights are a matter that is never far from their minds. In fact, many present at the rally yesterday, including Colonel Vo Dai Ton and Bao Khanh Nguyen, are people who have made the treacherous journey to resettle in Australia in an effort to find freedom and liberty. Despite successfully settling here, they have not forgotten about the Vietnamese people who continue to live under an oppressive regime which fails to recognise basic human rights. Not only does Vietnam have inadequate laws to protect labour rights; it also experiences widespread police abuse, censorship, escalating land right crises, and control being exercised over many religious institutions. More than 100 political prisoners including poets, songwriters, musicians and bloggers are behind bars at the moment.

Since obtaining a seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2013, Vietnam has only accepted 182 out of 227 recommendations made by the council. This raises serious concerns about its approach to upholding fundamental rights. Given the Vietnamese Prime Minister's visit to Australia this week, I specifically asked Labor's shadow minister for foreign affairs, The Hon Tanya Plihersek MP, to raise the concerns of the Australian Vietnamese community with him.

I would like to acknowledge the President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Mr Tri Vo, and New South Wales President of the VCA, Dr Thang Ha. Both have been at the forefront of raising the issue of human rights violations. In the rally yesterday there were also many prominent leaders of the Vietnamese community here in Australia, including Joachim Nguyen, Son Van Nguyen, Cong Le, Thanh Nguyen and Duy Nguyen. These influential members have also taken a leading role in advocating against the human rights violations that are occurring in Vietnam and, in particular, drawing attention to the country's tainted judicial system. As Australians, I believe we have a moral responsibility to encourage and promote the universal respect for human rights. Therefore, we must not stay silent where we observe deplorable human rights violations wherever they occur around the globe.