Your Excellency,

I am writing to call for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Nguyễn Bắc Truyển.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyển is a legal expert and Hoa Hao Buddhist who has devoted his life to promoting the rights and freedoms of some of the most vulnerable people in Vietnam, including marginalized religious communities, land grabbing victims, and families of prisoners of conscience.

In 2004, Truyển was the first entrepreneur in Vietnam to voluntarily introduce social compliance and gender equality standards in his two companies, where he also provided free legal assistance to victims of land grabbing. In 2006 he was arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in prison followed by two years’ mandatory supervision by local officials. After his release in 2010, he joined the Vietnamese Political and Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, which assists prisoners and their families. From 2014 until his arrest in 2017, he coordinated assistance for disabled veterans in a program of the Catholic Redemptorist Bureau for Justice and Peace in Ho Chi Minh City.

Despite years of harassment, forced eviction and violent assault in retaliation for his peaceful activities, Truyển remained committed to improving the lives of marginalized and vulnerable citizens.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyển was arbitrarily arrested by Vietnamese police on July 30, 2017 in Ho Chi Minh City and held incommunicado at B-14 Detention Center in Hanoi for six months. He was not allowed to meet with his defense counsel until two weeks before his trial on April 5, 2018, when he was convicted of “carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the government” and sentenced to eleven years’ imprisonment followed by three years of mandatory supervision by local authorities.

Nguyen Bac Truyen is currently held at An Điềm Prison in Quang Nam province, 800 kilometers (500 miles) from his wife and family, despite repeated requests to be transferred to a prison closer to his home. When his mother passed away in November 2021, he was not allowed to have his sentence briefly suspended so that he could attend her funeral and perform his filial duty according to Vietnamese custom. Nguyen Bac Truyen suffers from several medical ailments, including heart valve disease, gastritis, back pain, and swollen joints. Despite multiple requests, he has not had a proper medical examination since his arrest in 2017.

I believe that the charges against Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển are completely without foundation and that he has been targeted for his peaceful defense of human rights. Furthermore, we note that the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển is a violation of several articles in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Vietnam has acceded to, including Article 18 (right to freedom of religion or belief), Article 7 (freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment), Article 9 (right to liberty and security of the person and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention), and Article 14 (right to equality before the law; the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and to have a fair and public hearing by an impartial tribunal established by law).

I therefore join numerous civil society organizations, individuals,UN human rights rapporteurs, and international parliamentarians in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Nguyễn Bắc Truyển, and a complete cessation of all forms of harassment against him and his family.

Sincerely,