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Brussels, 1 February 2019

Your Excellency,

as Members of the European Parliament, we are writing to express our deep concern over the situation of the environment and labor rights defender **Hoang Duc Binh** and his deteriorating health condition in prison.

In addition to his blogging on the environmental disaster caused by the Taiwanese steel company Formosa Ha Tinh along the Vietnamese central coast in April 2016, he has worked closely with the Catholic community in central Vietnam to assist victims to obtain compensation for damages. He was also the vice president of the independent Viet Labour Movement.

Hoang Duc Binh was arrested in May 2017 and later tried and sentenced in February 2018 to 14 years in prison, under charges of Article 330 and 331 of the Criminal Code for “Resisting a law enforcement officer in the performance of his/her official duties” and “Abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state.” It is concerning that the charges against him appear to focus on his activities, among others, protected under articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a State Party. We would also like to remind you of the findings and recommendations of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which considered Hoang Duc Binh’s detention arbitrary in August 2018.

As the European Union and Vietnam are currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement, the promotion and protection of fundamental rights must remain a common benchmark. The EVFTA commits the European Union and Vietnam to respect and effectively implement such principles and fundamental rights as provided in the ICCPR.

Therefore, we ask for Hoang Duc Binh to be immediately and unconditionally released, for the Government of Vietnam to provide concrete assurances that adequate compensation or other reparations will be made as required under international law, and for the initiation of an investigation into the police, court, and prison officials responsible for his initial and ongoing abuse and mistreatment. We would also like to highlight the importance for Hoang Duc Binh to be allowed to remain inside his home country, Vietnam, and not forced into exile as a precondition for his release.

Sincerely,

Barbara LOCHBIHLER (Greens/EFA)  
Wajid KHAN (S&D)  
Petras AUSTREVICIUS (ALDE)  
Anne-Marie MINEUR (GuE)  
Ana GOMES (S&D)  
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