Lieutenant General Tran Dai Quang
Minister of Public Security
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Ha Noi, Vietnam

Copy to:
Ambassador Nguyen Quoc Cuong
Embassy of Vietnam
1233 20th Street NW, STE 400
Washington, DC 20036

Date: _____

Dear Minister:

Father Nguyen Van Ly, now 64, has spent almost two decades in prison since the 1970s – usually in harsh conditions and often in solitary confinement – for calling on Vietnamese authorities to respect freedom of expression and other human rights. Father Ly, a Catholic priest, is one of dozens of activists serving long jail terms for their peaceful criticism of the government. He is in very poor health and should never have been arrested in the first place. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

When he was in Ba Sao prison in northern Viet Nam, Father Ly was held mainly in solitary confinement. He suffered a stroke there in November 2009. He was serving an 8-year prison term (to be followed by 5 years of house arrest) for "conducting propaganda against the state" when a stroke and evidence of a brain tumor led to a "temporary suspension" of his sentence in March 2010. While on parole to treat his serious health problems, he was living in a house for retired priests in the diocese of the Archbishop of Hue. He was re-arrested in Hue and taken back to prison in an ambulance on July 25, 2011. Authorities claim he was returned to prison for distributing anti-government leaflets during his medical leave.

Nguyen Van Ly is one of the founders of the internet-based pro-democracy movement Bloc 8406, and has helped to establish other political groups that are banned by the Vietnamese authorities. He also published a dissident journal, *To Do Ngon Luan* (Freedom and Democracy). On April 15, 2006 he posted on the Internet a "Call for Freedom of Speech", which is apparently is one of the acts for which he was sent to prison in March 2007, despite the fact that Viet Nam is a 1988 signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that governments will not penalize critical expression.

We request the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Nguyen Van Ly. We ask for assurances that he has full access to any medical attention that he may require, as well as access to his family and a lawyer of his choice.

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