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Statement of the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism

regarding the increasing repression by the Vietnamese communist government

Over the past 5 years, since Mr. Tô Lâm took de facto power in the shadow of Mr. Nguyễn Phú Trọng, who was exhausted both physically and mentally, internal purges and the crackdown on freedom of expression have greatly intensified.

Since August 2024, when Mr. Tô Lâm officially replaced Mr. Nguyễn Phú Trọng, the crackdown on those who disagree with the government has become brutal. Most of the nearly 500 known political prisoners were arrested recently. The sentences have also become particularly harsh—7 years, 10 years, 15 years—for people whose only crime is expressing opinions they believe are right for the country, but that the communist leaders don't want to hear, while in the most violent dictatorships today, similar charges only lead to six months or a year in prison.

Some concrete examples. Phạm Thi Đoan Trang, a woman disabled after being beaten in the legs by the police, was sentenced to 9 years in prison simply for writing two small books and a few articles that absolutely did not call for revolt; Hoàng Thị Hồng Thái, a woman alone raising 5 young children, including one with a mental disorder, has been detained since six months just for sharing some thoughts about her country on Facebook; Phạm Chí Dũng was sentenced to 15 years in prison simply for founding the Association of Independent Journalists. With Tô Lâm, the Vietnamese communist regime is just behind North Korea in terms of brutality.

In the particular case of the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism, over the past 2 years, many of our comrades and supporters have been harassed at home as well as at their workplace, questioned multiple times at the police station, and sometimes even physically assaulted. Eight of our comrades have been arrested, only three arrests were made public, the other five were known only to their family and friends:

- Trần Khắc Đức was arrested on November 09/2024,

- Quách Gia Khang was arrested on March 18/2025,
- Nguyễn Duy Niệm was arrested on October 10/2025,
- Chu Tuấn Anh was arrested on January 25/2026,
- Nguyễn Thành Tiến was arrested on April 01/2026,
- Trần Văn Khanh was arrested on April 01/2026,
- Đinh Thanh Tùng was arrested on April 01/2026,
- Nguyễn Hữu Bình was arrested on May 25/2026.

Except for Nguyễn Duy Niệm, 58, a veteran Communist Party member and a former executive of a state-owned company, all of them are young people with a strong sense of patriotism who, after finishing university, put a lot of efforts into learning about the country's issues and what solutions were needed. These efforts to learn and think led them to the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism.

Among our eight imprisoned comrades, two cases are particularly noteworthy:

1/ Chu Tuấn Anh was kidnapped in Laos, where he was living and working legally.

2/ Trần Khắc Đức was sentenced to 7 years in prison during the first-instance trial on 11/21/2025, and his sentence was confirmed at the appeal trial on 03/27/2026. Both trials were secret and very hasty, without a lawyer, and the family was only informed at the time of allowed visits.

In both cases, the communist government acted like a gang. Chu Tuấn Anh is not the only kidnapping case; the communist government has abducted many people abroad, including a case personally led by Mr. Tô Lâm. Trần Khắc Đức's secret trial is just a typical example of most recent political trials. Arrests made without public announcement have also become standard practice.

All our arrested comrades have joined the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism because they shared the idea that the nation is a sentiment, a space of solidarity, and a shared project for the future, because they believed that Vietnam only has a future if there is pluralistic democracy, and they supported the struggle for democracy in a spirit of national reconciliation and concord through non-violent means.

All their writings, the reasons why they are persecuted, show nothing but this faith; all are just serious and moderate essays.

The communist government accused them of *'having produced, stored, and circulated documents intended to oppose the Socialist State of Vietnam'* under Article 117 of the Penal Code, even though none of these articles ever mention the Socialist State of Vietnam, not even once. They only express the view of the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism, according to which Marxism-Leninism is both false and harmful; the 30-year civil war from 1945 to

1975, which the Communist Party boasts about and is proud of, was a terrible disaster for the country; the massacres of members of nationalist parties after the August 1945 Revolution and the Land Reform were major crimes; following China's example is a mistake born of superficiality. But what law forbids criticizing Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party? The Communist Party has a propaganda department and a central ideological council with tens of thousands of officials, so why not debate? Resorting to violence only proves that one has run out of arguments.

We analyze these topics not to stir up hatred against the Communist Party, but simply so that we, all Vietnamese, can learn lessons together for the future. Also, we don't place all the blame on the Communist Party. We think these tragedies are mainly due to a lack of knowledge and political thinking, a responsibility that Vietnamese intellectuals should above all bear. Even so, the Communist Party, especially with Tô Lâm having all the power, considered us enemies and severely repressed us, because in their eyes, anyone attached to their country and daring to raise their head is an enemy. For Tô Lâm's Communist Party, good Vietnamese are those who bow their heads. The Communist Party is not a Vietnamese political party, it is an occupying force.

We are angry but we hold no hatred. These brutal repressive measures targeting those who wish for a democratic future for the country, among whom the Rally for Democracy and Pluralism is just a small component, only strengthen our faith and determination. Our faith and determination are even stronger knowing that the vast majority of today's Communist Party members have also awakened. There were once high-ranking perceptive communists who saw the path the country should take, like Trần Độ, Trần Xuân Bách, Nguyễn Hộ, Phạm Quế Dương and Lê Văn Lâm. Today, most of our comrades living inside the country come from communist families. Our country is rapidly moving towards a consensus on a shared future.

More than ever, the country's current situation forces us to recall two fundamental historical pieces of evidence.

First, no communist country has ever reached a high level of development and income. At best, by opening up to the world, it can make some progress, only to get stuck in the middle-income trap. So, the country only has a prosperous future if it gets rid of the communist regime.

Second, no communist regime has produced a single philosophical, literary, artistic, economic, or social work of any real value; the few remarkable works always come from dissidents or victims of the regime. In today's world knowledge, skills, ideas, and initiatives determine a nation's standing and honor; the communist regime must end for the country to have a chance to rise.

Our country is also facing a big danger. Until recently, democratic countries favored our country in their efforts to pull Vietnam out of China's orbit, which they saw as a threat; Vietnam was seen as a natural destination for multinational companies leaving China. However, over the past five years, Vietnam has gradually become a vassal of China, and

democratic countries no longer have any reason to favor Vietnam, investments gradually shift to other countries. Tô Lâm is unaware of this change, even though he is the cause. The massive investment projects meant to boost GDP figures will fail and only drain our country, because reality has shown that this regime does not have people capable of planning and managing major projects; the victims of these oversized projects could very well be the Communist Party members themselves, because Tô Lâm needs both money and also scapegoats. Promises of growth above 10% will bring nothing but shamelessness. Anger will break out, and Tô Lâm will crack down because repression is his job and it's also the only thing he knows how to do, especially since he believes he can do anything as long as he's protected by his Chinese bosses. We need to stay alert, but that doesn't mean we should be pessimistic.

The Rally for Democracy and Pluralism does not back down from the brutality of Tô Lâm's government. Our warm affection for our fellow democrats in trouble goes hand in hand with the belief that they will regain their freedom in the near future. We have every reason to believe that the vast majority of the Vietnamese people, including members of the Communist Party, have realized that it's time for us to change the course of history and that we have the ability to do so.

The Rally for Democracy and Pluralism will continue to make its modest contribution to democratization efforts in order to return the country to all the Vietnamese people, regardless of their position or political past.

With the belief that our country has the potential to rise strongly and become a Republic of Vietnam that future generations can be proud of.

On behalf of the **Rally for Democracy and Pluralism**

Nguyen Gia Kieng, representative of the leadership committee