



# HỘI GIA ĐÌNH TÙ NHÂN CHÍNH TRỊ VIỆT NAM

## FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 5435, ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0635  
TELEPHONE: 703-560-0058

October 1989

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Ladies & Gentlemen:

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me to be here today and introduce myself and tell you a little about the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association, of which I am President.

My name is Khuc Minh Tho and I previously worked for the Vietnamese Embassy in Manila, Philippines before coming to the United States in 1977 as a refugee. My husband was a former Colonel in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and was a reeducation camp prisoner in Northern Vietnam for 13 years after the fall of Saigon. He was just released in February 1988.

The Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association was founded in 1977 and I have been the President of this organization since that time.

The FVPPA is a nationwide, non-profit organization. We try to provide support services to over 10,000 members by sharing information, helping them file documents with INS and the State Department (BRP/ODP), obtaining LOI, helping the ex-prisoners arrive in third country camps, and continually expressing our concern to the State Department and various Congressional entities. We also maintain computerized listings of our membership, as well as political prisoners at home. We keep our data up-to-date so that they can be useful to resettlement agencies in their understanding of the problems that this population will face when they arrive in this country.

Occasionally we organize fundraisers, but our primary source of funding is our own. We have not received any financial assistance from any government or private sources; and all of our workers volunteer their time and services.

In the information sheet handed out to you today, we present some major areas of concern that need to be dealt with in our efforts to help our dear relatives and friends return to a normal life. We also spell out a series of activities we are trying to perform in order to achieve successfully the purpose of our association. Needless to say, this important task requires a tremendous coordination of efforts from both public and private sectors. The reeducation center detainees will need all the services that can be provided to them. We count very much on your cooperation and support so that we can carry out our activities properly and effectively.

I will be pleased to answer any questions or concerns you may have about our Association and let you know ways in which you can assist us.

*# The most important thing is to push the processing of prisoners as many as possible - as rapidly as possible.*



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### CONCERNS

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#### Traumatic Experience

Naturally, those who had been incarcerated for years, with limitations of what they could do or what they could receive, will have problems in adjusting to their new lives. For years those men were neither allowed to write nor receive letters. It was not until 1979 - 1980 that their families were allowed to visit them once or twice a year. Their only resting time was in the indoctrination sessions at night. They saw their friends go one by one because of disease, suicide, or starvation; they were all too weak to work.

#### Family Structure

Now, coming back to freedom, for those who still have families at home, they see all their children cannot complete their education, but must work at odd jobs; some of the families have already been broken up. And for those whose families have left the country and resettled abroad, the situation does not seem any better. Their wives and children have adjusted to American ways and the former prisoners will find family relationships have changed in ways that are hard to accept. It is not easy for a Vietnamese man to accept his wife's authority, and his children's knowledge better than his own. Some of the wives have taken another man in their loneliness - although they may not share the same living quarters. Worse, he sees that most of his friends, comrades in arms, are now settled with good jobs and good living standards.

#### Cultural/Language Barriers

We must be aware of the cultural differences and language barriers that many will face. Some will have limited English speaking capabilities and others will find adapting to the cultural difference will pose hardships and handicaps. We must be prepared to assist them in these areas of concern so that they will at least have an opportunity to enjoy and appreciate their freedom.

### ACTIVITIES

- I. To continue to work towards the release and resettlement of the remaining reeducation camp prisoners.
2. To assist the Department of State and ODP in updating lists of prisoners and their families.
3. To work with other mutual assistance associations and service agencies in helping former political prisoners and their families to adjust smoothly to their new lives, especially in the following areas:
  - Language and/or Skills Training
  - Housing
  - Health Care
  - Education