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Honorable Mr. President Trương Tấn Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

(Via the Ambassador of Vietnam in France)

RE: Death penalty in Vietnam

Mr. President,

We who are members of the Plum Village community in France, which includes monastic and lay practitioners from several countries, respectfully write this letter to ask you and the Vietnamese government to order a ban on the death penalty in Vietnam.

Presently in the world there are many countries that have banned the death penalty. As of 2010, only 21 countries still carry out this penalty. By taking prompt action, Mr. President, you will be able first and foremost to save the lives of 586 prisoners on death row. These individuals are currently living in the expectation of receiving a lethal injection, like Mr. Nguyen Anh Tuan who was so executed on August 6th.

The death penalty is not an effective deterrent to crime. Out of compassion towards the nation, please intervene so that these prisoners on death row may have the opportunity to redeem themselves while they are in prison and become good citizens.

In the beginning of the Ly Dynasty, death penalties such as being boiled in a cauldron of hot oil, being trampled upon by an elephant or being dragged by a horse were banned as our country came to embrace the teachings of the Buddha. In the time of the Buddha, Angulimala the serial killer was forgiven by King Prasanajit, and he became one of the most compassionate people in the Sangha of the Buddha.

If the Socialist Republic of Vietnam agrees, we can send our monastic or lay Dharma teachers to prisons to guide incarcerated persons in the practice of mindfulness meditation and help them to transform and to rediscover the joy of wholesome living -- even while they are still in prisons -- as we and our friends already have done and are doing in a number of prisons all over the world.

We are sharing this letter with friends in religious and humanitarian community worldwide. Many people will add their names to this request that you, Mr. President, use your considerable power so that now and in the future many people may benefit from your compassionate action.

We respectfully express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, and we wish that you may have a long life in peace.