



The Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO)

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The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing...[Edmund Burke](#)

Hanoi is obsessed with punishing, oppressing and punishing the former loyal allies of the United States -- Montagnards and Lao Hmong, and as a result lost large segments of their populations during the Vietnam War. Their oppression by the communists continues.

Momentum is building in Congress to change the restrictions under provisions of the USA Patriot Act and the Real ID Act. The Hmong of Laos, the Montagnards in Vietnam and other freedom fighters, who have fought tyrannical regimes alongside and at the request of Americans and are now considered terrorists under this act and are therefore ineligible for asylum or green cards. This initiative is led by Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy, the new chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who said in a statement: "We can protect national security, provide discretion to the administration, and at the same time fix the law so it can be applied predictably, fairly and in a timely manner. By doing so we will bring our laws back in line with our values." Senator Norm Coleman is taken the lead on the Republican side. The anti-terror restrictions, which have ensnared other groups as well, also bar people who provided "material support" to terrorist organizations; albeit without any choice.

The Montagnards and the Hmong have and continue to suffer from gross human rights abuses, religious persecution and thinly disguised genocide. The Vietnamese and Laotian governments brand Montagnards, Hmong and other ethnic minority groups who fought against the communists during the Vietnam War, as well as anyone who voice opposition to them today, as terrorists. Often when these freedom fighters are able flee oppression to seek asylum in another country, refugee officials there also identify them as terrorists. Refoulement of the Montagnards who are currently seeking refuge in Cambodia is an untenable response. Unfortunately, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Ellen Sauerbrey, at a recent Hanoi press conference stated, "The U.S. and Vietnam shared agreement that those Montagnards who feared persecution in Vietnam should stay in the communist country and take their concerns directly to US missions" (AFP, Feb. 5). The problem is, the Vietnamese communists won't let them out of prison to go to the U.S. missions. For those not in prison, by going to a U.S. mission, the potential refugees identify themselves to the communist, losing the limited protection anonymity provides.

The Montagnard Human Rights Organization and the Montagnard community as a whole support the legislative efforts of Senators Patrick Leahy and Norm Coleman and others, who seek to change the restrictions under provisions of the USA Patriot Act and the Real ID Act and "fix the law so it can be applied predictably, fairly and in a timely manner". Allowing countries to brand U.S. allies as "terrorists" simply because they resisted oppression at the bequest of the United States is simply dishonorable.

Rong Nay
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