

**Amnesty International Group 471**  
**Our Efforts to Free Prisoners of Conscience**  
**By Jim Rockoff, volunteer**

Our current 'adopted' Prisoner of Conscience is Dr. Pham Hong Son, MD, a physician and businessman in Vietnam, who was arrested in 2002 for posting essays on the Internet. The writings were opinions about democracy and human rights in Vietnam. Some were his own writings and others were from the Internet. None of his writings advocated violence. Dr. Son was charged with espionage and "falsely accuse the State of violating human rights". He was sentenced to 13 years in prison. He forwarded his writings to Vietnamese officials, hardly the actions of a spy. During his trial which lasted half a day, Dr. Son was denied adequate legal representation. Both journalists and diplomats who requested to be present were not allowed inside. On appeal his sentence was reduced and he began 3 years house arrest August 30, 2006. Later in an interview with a German news agency he made comments including "I will speak and exchange my opinions freely and openly. I am a person who wants to see Vietnam have a free political system... Everything I have done, I feel no regret. I just regret that I did not do more before my arrest." Since his house arrest began Dr. Son had faced intense surveillance, police interrogation and the seizing of his computer and phone equipment. The Amnesty office in London reported he remains under house arrest as of February 2008.

**LATEST UPDATE:** In February of 2008 Dr Pham Hong Son went to the funeral of long time prominent dissident Hoang Minh Chen and spoke. He appeared wearing a white headband usually only worn by family members. He said: "Today is a big event for democratic activists, because Professor Chinh is one of our most renowned activists.... His passing is a turning point in our movement."

**Congressman Ed Royce 40th District Orange County supported house resolution 320 in early March 2006 calling for the release of Dr Pham Hong Son.**

**[Royce Calls for Release of Pham Hong Son](#)**

*Subcommittee on Global Human Rights Passes Resolution  
Calling for Release of Jailed Vietnamese dissident.*

**"The Vietnamese government's policy of intolerance towards free speech is intolerable. I urge you all to support the unconditional release of Dr. Pham Hong Son."**

Please, join us as we keep the pressure on to the Vietnamese government by writing on behalf of Dr. Pham Hong Son. We hold letter writing sessions at our meetings - see [Home](#) for meeting details.