

U.S. Rep. Grothman: In defense of religious liberty, Grothman adopts two Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience

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(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Glenn Grothman (WI-06) today announced that he has adopted Y Pum Bya and Y Yich, two Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience, through the Defending Freedoms Project of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

*“Many Americans do not know the horrors of communism and the human rights abuses that happen daily in communist countries like Vietnam,” **said Grothman.** “The United States has a role as a leader to promote and defend religious liberty on the world stage, and that starts with denouncing the Vietnamese government for its track record of religious persecution.*

“The stories of Y Pum Bya and Y Yich remind us of the importance of protecting religious freedom in the United States. Nobody should be persecuted, hurt or killed because of their religious beliefs.

“Religious persecution in Vietnam did not start with Pastors Pum Bya and Yich, but it could end with their release, along with the release of all Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience and the cessation of the country’s systematic trampling of religions that threaten their communist rule.

“I urge my colleagues in Congress to sponsor Prisoners of Conscience so we can shine a light on the heinous human rights abuses that take place as a result of religious persecution in places like Vietnam and around the globe.”

Background Information

Y Pum Bya is a Protestant leader of the Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ (MECC), and Y Yich is a Protestant pastor of the Degar Protestant Church. They are both staunch advocates for religious freedom.

On April 10, 2018, Y Pum Bya was arrested by Vietnamese authorities following allegations of “spreading false information about Vietnam’s violations of minority rights and religious freedom”. While imprisoned, he was allegedly interrogated about his religious activities, tortured, and forced to sign commitments to stop worshipping. On January 31, 2019, Y Pum Bya was sentenced to 14 years in prison for “undermining national unity policy”. He remains imprisoned today.

On May 13, 2013, Y Yich was arrested in Vietnam and sentenced to 12 years in prison for “undermining national unity policy,” like Y Pum Bya. Y Yich was accused of meeting with prisoners of conscience and spreading Degar Protestantism, a religious movement not approved by the Vietnamese government. Vietnamese authorities have reportedly tortured Yich in prison, leading to deteriorating health conditions, while also denying him access to medical care.

Grothman is one of 36 sitting Members of Congress to adopt a Prisoner of Conscience.

Learn more about the Defending Freedoms Project [here](#).

Learn more about Y Pum Bya [here](#).

Learn more about Y Yich [here](#).

Learn more about the human rights abuses in Vietnam [here](#).