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VIETNAM Country frees Catholic priest and human rights defender, Father Nguyen Van Ly

A prominent Catholic Priest was released from prison in Hanoi yesterday after three years in solitary confinement. The sixty-three year old Priest has suffered two strokes in jail, leaving him partially paralyzed.

His release follows a sustained international campaign on his behalf, in which Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) was involved. The campaign was led by the US-based legal advocacy group, Freedom Now and included a statement last July by 37 US Senators calling on the President of Vietnam to free Father Nguyen Van Ly. Despite little obvious movement on the case in recent months, news of the release was reported in the early hours of Monday morning.

Father Ly has been a leading human rights defender since the 1970s, campaigning for religious freedom, democracy and free media reporting. He has spent more than 15 years in prison in total.

CSW's Advocacy Director, Tina Lambert, said: "We warmly welcome the release of Father Nguyen Van Ly, whose work defending human rights has seen him imprisoned many times following trials that did not follow due process under Vietnamese or international law. Father Ly will now be able to spend time with his family and receive appropriate medical assistance."

Notes to Editors:

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