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Visit to Viet Nam first in decades by Amnesty International

A representative from Amnesty International has visited Viet Nam to open up channels for dialogue with the government on the human rights situation in the country.

The visit was the first by the organization since the late 1970s.

“We were pleased to accept the invitation from Viet Nam’s authorities to visit the country to discuss Amnesty International’s work and approaches, which includes engaging with governments all over the world,” said Frank Jannuzi, Amnesty International USA’s Deputy Executive Director, who spent six days in the South East Asian country.

“We also used the opportunity to raise our concerns about the human rights situation in Viet Nam, including the severe restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.”

Over the past two years the Vietnamese authorities have locked up dozens of human rights defenders, including bloggers, songwriters, lawyers, labour activists, members of religious groups, democracy activists and others, even as they bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council in 2014-2016.

Amnesty International visited Viet Nam’s capital Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City in the south of the country, meeting with officials responsible for human rights, foreign affairs, public security, labour rights issues and religious affairs.

Amnesty International held private meetings with foreign diplomats in Hanoi, and met with academics, some religious leaders and former prisoners of conscience Pham Hong Son and Nguyen Van Dai.

“This visit provided a preliminary opportunity to discuss our work and concerns with Viet Nam’s government,” said Isabelle Arradon, Amnesty International’s Deputy Asia-Pacific Director, who oversees the organization’s work on Viet Nam.

“We very much hope that Amnesty International representatives will be allowed to make further visits to the country this year, and that we will have ongoing constructive dialogue with the government on human rights in Viet Nam,” Arradon said.