

### Sheppard Mullin Pro Bono Team Secures Asylum for Prominent Vietnamese Legal Scholar and Human Rights Advocate

04.01.2020

Sheppard Mullin client, renowned Vietnamese legal scholar, political prisoner, and human rights activist Dr. Cu Huy Ha Vu was recently granted asylum by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services after nearly five years since his release from prison in Vietnam and arrival in the United States.

The son of a prominent Vietnamese family with deep ties to the Communist Party of Vietnam (his father, Cu Huy Can, was a prominent poet, a close confidante of Ho Chi Minh, and signed Vietnam's Declaration of Independence as Cabinet minister in the first Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam), Dr. Vu, as an official in Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, became an outspoken advocate for legal and human rights in Vietnam. Through his law firm (his wife, Nguyen Thi Duong Ha, was the lead attorney in its Hanoi office), he frequently criticized the Communist Party of Vietnam while representing religious minorities and bringing high-profile lawsuits against the Vietnamese government. For example, Dr. Vu challenged the Vietnamese law mandating the existence of a single political party (the Communist Party of Vietnam) and sued the President of Vietnam to highlight the lack of basic individual rights afforded to Vietnamese citizens.

After being arrested by the Vietnamese government in November 2010, Dr. Vu's profile grew as he received support from human rights activists in Vietnam and around the world. In April 2011, Dr. Vu was sentenced to seven years in prison for circulating "anti-state propaganda." Dr. Vu's trial – which was covered by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* – lasted less than six hours. The trial and verdict were criticized by the U.S. State Department for its lack of due process, and many prominent human rights organizations declared Dr. Vu a prisoner of conscience. Dr. Vu spent nearly four years in a Vietnamese prison before being released and immediately flown to the U.S. through the assistance of the U.S. State Department. Since arriving in the U.S., Dr. Vu has been a fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy and a visiting professor at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Dr. Vu now lives with his wife in Alexandria, VA, and they are hoping to soon be reunited with one of their sons in Australia when they are able to travel. Dr. Vu's work on behalf of political dissidents and opponents of totalitarianism continues.

Sheppard Mullin is proud to have represented Dr. Vu since 2014. The pro bono team representing Dr. Vu include associates Drew Svor and Eamon Tierney, as well as partner Brian Weimer.

#### Attorneys

Douglas A. "Drew" Svor

Brian D. Weimer