

VIETNAM

Response to human rights advocate's jail sentence 'pitiful'

James Massola
South-east Asia correspondent

Jakarta: Canberra's reluctance to criticise a Vietnamese court decision to sentence Australian citizen Chau Van Kham to 12 years jail over links to a peaceful pro-democracy organisation has been labelled "pitifully weak" by a leading human rights advocate.

Kham, a 70-year-old Vietnamese-Australian man who is a member of the US-based human rights group Viet Tan, was convicted on terrorism charges. He was accused of giving \$400 to a man to help fund the activities of Viet Tan.

The Ministry of Public Security said he had raised funds for anti-state activities, joined anti-Vietnam protests in Australia and recruited members for Viet Tan.

While primarily US-based, Viet Tan has members in Australia as well. The United Nations has described them as "a peaceful organisation advocating for democratic reform" in Vietnam.

The Australian director of Human Rights Watch, Elaine Pearson, says that in the 1980s, Viet Tan overtly supported resistance to the socialist regime in Vietnam but "they haven't done that for a long time".

"They operate openly in the US, in Australia, and certainly they are not a terrorist group. For someone to be prosecuted for associating with them - these people are not ISIS. These people promote human rights and democracy in Vietnam," she says. "They have members in Sydney and Melbourne, for example, they are active in Australia but it's in the US where they are much more active."

In the lead up to Kham's trial, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs would say only that it was "providing consular assistance to an Australian man detained in Vietnam".

Following his conviction, Foreign



Australian Chau Van Kham is escorted into a Vietnamese court. Photo: AP

Minister Marise Payne said, "As Mr Chau is able to appeal the sentence under Vietnamese law, it would be inappropriate, and not in Mr Chau's best interests, to comment while legal processes remain available."

"However, the government of Vietnam is well aware of our interest in Mr Chau's case and his welfare." The minister later confirmed: "We will continue to engage with our Vietnamese counterparts on this matter."

On a visit to Hanoi in August 2019, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, "Australians need to abide by the laws of the countries which they visit" when asked about Kham's case.

Pearson says Australia's response has been "pitifully weak".

"It's extremely disappointing, one would have hoped that the Australian government would have learnt lessons from the case of Hakeem al-Araibi - they need to

speak publicly as well as privately to move governments to do the right thing."

Araibi, a refugee footballer who was detained in Bangkok last November and who faced deportation to his birth country of Bahrain - where he feared torture or worse - was released in February after a massive campaign eventually forced the Australian government to speak out forcibly, publicly, to call for his release.

Kham is a retired baker from Sydney, who will not benefit from the noisy backing of the global football community.

And Vietnam is an increasingly important ally of Australia and the US in south-east Asia.

It is seen as a balancing force against an increasingly assertive China. The Australia-Vietnamese trade relationship is strong and security ties are growing stronger, too.

Tech multimillionaire's startup investments about positive returns for planet

Jacqueline Maley

What is the meaning of money if you no longer need to work for it?

It is a philosophical problem few of us will face, but one that Silicon Valley tech investor Charly Kleissner has looked in the eye.

Austrian-born Kleissner is a computer scientist who worked closely with Steve Jobs and developed the operating system that is the foundation for Apple's iOS.

In 1999, Kleissner was the chief technology officer of the company Ariba when it went public. He sold the majority of his stock options, netting millions of dollars for himself and his architect wife, Lisa.

"After so-called 'liquidity events' in Silicon Valley, partners often go different ways, if one wants to do the Ferrari thing and the other wants to do the mindfulness thing," says Kleissner, 63.

Together the couple decided to go a third way - to engage in what is now called 'impact investing', but which didn't have a name when they started doing it in the early 2000s.

Kleissner hastens to clarify he is a multimillionaire, not a billionaire. "In Silicon Valley, it is a caste system. Billionaires are not that collaborative because they have so much money they think they can solve things by themselves."

The Kleissners decided to use their wealth to make "positive investments aligned with our values", he says. "Back then, our financial advisor didn't really understand what we were asking."

Now impact investment - sinking money into companies and ventures that deliver positive social and environmental returns - is a growing movement. This week Sydney will host an Impact Investment Summit, at which Kleissner will speak remotely from his home in Big Sur, California. Former foreign affairs minister Julie Bishop will also speak.

"If you are 100 per cent an impact investor, you want to do it across your whole portfolio, in all your asset classes," Kleissner says.

The Kleissners hold their cash in community development banks, rather than the Bank of America, for example, which "might use

your money to invest in dirty coal or the weapons industry, which is incompatible with our values".

They also invest in renewable energy projects, renewable timber, carbon offsets and social impact bonds - for example, in British organisation that seeks to lower recidivism rates in criminals.

Asked about Prime Minister Scott Morrison's stated desire to outlaw "secondary boycotts" of companies that deal with mining companies, Kleissner notes he is not an expert on Australian politics.



'Private capital expects to be compensated for whatever risks they take.'

Charly Kleissner, above with wife Lisa

But, he says: "The dirty coal industry is doomed to go under, no matter the regulatory environment."

"Private capital expects to be compensated for whatever risks they take, and as the liabilities get bigger, the money will dry up and [fossil fuel companies] will not get financing, even if regulators try to prolong their slow death," he says.

People on average salaries can engage in impact investment through "ESG" (public companies with good environmental, social and governance practices) or crowd-funding, he adds. "They can use a relatively small amount of capital to participate in initiatives they care about in their community."

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Development Applications

The following Development Applications and the supporting documentation are available online at <https://online.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/DA/OnExhibitions>

You can also view them online at Council's Town Hall Customer Service Centre, Level 2, Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street, Sydney or online at one of Council's Library networks.

For further information regarding these applications contact the relevant planning officer on 02 9265 9363. All written submissions should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, City of Sydney, GPO Box 1591, Sydney 2001.

Note: Should you make a submission, you must also make a public disclosure of any donation to a Councillor and/or gift to a Councillor or Council employee in the previous two (2) years. Further information, including a 'Political Donation and Gifts Disclosure Statement' form and a glossary of terms, is available online or in person at any of Council's office locations.

DA Number: D/2019/1196

Address: 644 George Street, Sydney

Proposal: Proposed extension of operating hours in association with the licensed food and drink premises known as 'Guzman Y Gomez' occupying Tenancy 10.31 on Level 10 within the World Square development. Proposed indoor hours of operation are 24-hour trading Monday to Sunday inclusive. Proposed outdoor dining hours of operation are between 7.00am and 1.00am, the following morning Monday to Sunday inclusive. Current approved hours of operation are between 8.00am and midnight Monday to Sunday inclusive which were approved under D/2005/178. The proposal includes the provision for stock deliveries and a take away pick-up/delivery service.

DA Number: D/2019/1182

Address: 501-509 Botany Road, Zetland

Proposal: Land subdivision into 6 lots.

For more information call 02 9265 9333 or email council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au | cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

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