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## **Press Release - Senator Edmund S. Muskie Comments on Vietnamese Election**

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE News

SUITE 1004 • 1660 I. STREET, N.W. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 • TELEPHONE (202) 833-3850

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dick Stewart

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1971

(202) 833-3850

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) declared today that developments surrounding the South Vietnamese election "reveal again the Thieu regime's callous disdain for the most elemental principles of political freedom."

In a statement issued by his office, Muskie said, ". . . the choice in this election has apparently been made before the ballots are cast or counted."

While Americans are told U.S. involvement in South Vietnam is necessary to the future of that country, "men and arms are to be used to perpetuate in power a regime which is afraid -- not just of the Viet Cong -- but of allowing any real choice to the Vietnamese people."

Senator Muskie served on a special presidential commission that was assigned to observe the South Vietnamese election in 1967.

The text of the Senator's statement follows:

"General Minh declined on August 20 to participate in the October presidential election in Vietnam on the ground that he will not be "a party to a shabby farce which will disappoint the people and prevent a reconciliation between Vietnamese. Immediately thereafter, the South Vietnamese Supreme Court reversed an earlier decision and put Vice President Ky's name on the ballot. The Vice President then announced he would not take part in the campaign. President Thieu reportedly has refused to revise the election arrangements.

These sorry developments underscore the fact that this fall's "presidential election" does not deserve that title. They reveal again the Thieu regime's callous disdain for the most elementary principles of political freedom.

Today and for too many days to come, young Americans and countless Vietnamese will suffer and die to prop up a "democracy" so undemocratic that the choice in this election has apparently been made before the ballots are cast or counted.

We are told that we must keep fighting a war in Indochina to give South Vietnam a reasonable chance for survival. And so American men and arms are to be used to perpetuate in power a regime which is afraid -- not just of the Viet Cong -- but of allowing any real choice to the Vietnamese people.

These people are allowed no choice -- but our choice is clear.

As I have said repeatedly, we must set a fixed date for total and prompt withdrawal from Indochina. To defend this Saigon regime is not worth one more human life -- and it is unworthy of America's free tradition."

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