

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/torture/ill-treatment/arbitrary detention

**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF VIET NAM**

Bui Thi Kim Thanh (f), aged 47, lawyer

Lawyer Bui Thi Kim Thanh is being held against her will at a mental hospital, in very poor conditions, where she is reportedly being forced to have injections of unknown drugs. There is apparently no medical basis for this, and it is believed to be an attempt by the authorities to punish her for her work on behalf of an unauthorised pro-democracy organisation.

Bui Thi Kim Thanh is a lawyer for the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV) (XXI), and also worked free of charge defending low-income families in her community who have had property confiscated by the authorities and who are seeking redress. The DPV (XXI) is an unauthorized organization established by prominent dissident Hoang Minh Chinh in June 2006, which calls for multi-party democracy and human rights.

Police detained Bui Thi Kim Thanh at her home in Ho Chi Minh City in the early hours of 2 November, and took her to a nearby hospital, where they tried to have her committed. However, two psychiatric doctors reportedly assessed her and concluded that she was not suffering from mental illness. After this the police took her to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, where she was admitted and remains confined to a room in area 4 of the hospital. She has been described as being unable to talk as an apparent consequence of the injections.

The authorities reportedly offered her release on condition that she did not speak about her treatment. Since she refused she is no longer allowed to receive any visits. Until this she had been allowed visits from her family.

Bui Thi Kim Thanh is not known to have been charged with any offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During 2006 dissidents and political activists have increasingly attempted to exercise their right to freedom of expression, forming a small number of unauthorized political parties, attempting to publish bulletins about freedom of expression, and using the internet and online petitions to advocate democracy and human rights. The authorities have harassed and interrogated many of those involved.

Viet Nam hosted the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit meetings between 12 and 19 November, which were attended by finance ministers and heads of state. In the run-up to the summit, and during it, several dissidents, including former prisoners of conscience, in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City were subjected to harassment, detention for interrogation, physical threats, surveillance and restrictions on movement.

Before now political or religious dissidents have reportedly been confined to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital for non-medical reasons, and suffered ill-treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern that Bui Thi Kim Thanh has been detained against her will at a mental institution and that she has been injected with unknown medication against her will, all without apparent medical need;
- expressing concern that her health is in danger, and that she is at risk of torture and ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to release Bui Thi Kim Thanh from Bien Hoa Mental Hospital immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to immediately investigate the arbitrary detention of Bui Thi Kim Thanh, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- pointing out that the harassment of Bui Thi Kim Thanh for carrying out her peaceful political activities and professional work is a violation of her rights to freedom of expression and association, and calling on the authorities to ensure that it is ended immediately.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Nguyen Tan Dung

Office of the Prime Minister

Hoang Hoa Tham

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Fax: + 844 823 1872 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Email: bambientap@mofa.gov.vn (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Public Security

Le Hong Anh

Ministry of Public Security

44 Yet Kieu Street

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Fax: + 844 825 2733

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Health

Tran Thi Trung Chien (f)

Ministry of Health

138A Giang Vo Street

Ban Dinh District

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Fax: + 844 826 5303

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 January 2007.