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News Flash

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Viet Nam: Cyber dissident released from prison

Internet dissident Nguyen Khac Toan has been released after spending four years in prison. The former soldier, maths teacher and businessman was jailed for emailing details of farmers' protests about official corruption and land confiscation to overseas Vietnamese groups.

"We welcome Nguyen Khac Toan's release but this harsh prison sentence should never have been imposed on him," said Janice Beanland, South East Asia campaigner at Amnesty International. "However, we are concerned and disappointed that he is now restricted under house arrest for the next three years and we call for the immediate removal of those restrictions. Nguyen Khac Toan was simply exercising his right to freedom of expression and Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience."

Nguyen Khac Toan was arrested in January 2002, charged with "spying" and sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest after his release. Speaking from his home earlier today he announced his release on 24 January under a prisoner amnesty to mark the Lunar New Year.

"We urge the Vietnamese government to release those other cyber dissidents who remain behind bars simply for using the Internet and email to express ideas about human rights and democracy," said Janice Beanland.

Nguyen Vu Binh, a journalist and writer, and Dr Pham Hong Son, a businessman and qualified doctor, were among a number of people arrested in a 2002 crackdown on dissidents. They were both charged with "spying" after peacefully calling for human rights and democratic change over the Internet. Nguyen Vu Binh is serving a prison sentence of seven years and Dr Pham Hong Son one of five years.

Public Document

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