

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE SUFFERS BEHIND BARS

Prisoner of conscience Huỳnh Trương Ca is being held in conditions of detention that further violates his rights. He shares a small, unlit cell with four other prisoners and cannot leave the cell, not even for meal times. The only time he leaves the cell is once a month for family visits. He also suffers several illnesses, yet the prison authorities refuse to provide him with the medical treatment he requires. The Ministry of Public Security plans to move him to another facility far away from his hometown. We call on the Vietnamese government and its Ministry of Public Security to release Huỳnh Trương Ca immediately and unconditionally.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
Số 1, Hoàng Hoa Thám, Ba Đình, Hà Nội,
Việt Nam
Fax : +84 80 48924
Email : thongtinchinphu@chinphu.vn

Dear Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc,

I am writing to express my great concern about the condition of Huỳnh Trương Ca who is being held at An Bình Detention Center in Đồng Tháp province.

Huỳnh Trương Ca is a prisoner of conscience. He was arrested and imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

According to his family, the prison authorities are not providing him with adequate medical care despite him suffering several known health conditions, including lung disease, stomach problems, high blood pressure and diabetes. His family has tried to send him medicine many times but this has been refused by the prison authorities.

I also understand that Huỳnh Trương Ca is sharing a small cell, with no lighting, with four other prisoners. Following death threats from another prisoner, he cannot leave his cell, not even for meal times. The prison authorities are aware of the threats but have done nothing to address them. The only time he leaves his cell is once a month for family visits.

I urge you Prime Minister to use your power to release Huỳnh Trương Ca immediately and unconditionally.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Huỳnh Trương Ca, 51, is a member of a non-registered group named Hiến Pháp (English translation: 'Constitution'), which focuses on promoting and protecting the basic human rights guaranteed in the Viet Nam 2013 Constitution.

On 4 September 2018, he was arrested when he was on the way to participate in a peaceful protest in Ho Chi Minh city. Another eight members of the group were also arrested on the same day.

Before being arrested, Huỳnh Trương Ca had previously been harassed and intimidated many times by local public security officials. The authorities wanted him to "stop using Facebook to talk about human rights and criticise the government". He refused to comply.

Following an unfair trial, the Peoples Court of Đồng Tháp Province sentenced Huỳnh Trương Ca to five years and six months imprisonment on 28 December 2018 for "conducting propaganda against the state" under article 117 of the Viet Nam 2015 Penal Code. The family of Huỳnh Trương Ca told Amnesty International that they were too poor to hire a lawyer to defend him and the authorities refused to provide access to one. In Vietnamese law and international law, the authorities are obliged to provide access to a lawyer to defendants if they are unable to hire one.

Huỳnh Trương Ca is now detained at the An Binh Detention Center, 70km away from his home. The family can visit him once a month to bring food and clothes.

In prison, Huỳnh Trương Ca shares a small, unlit cell with four other prisoners. They feel they cannot leave the cell, even for meal times, because of death threats from another prisoner. Huỳnh Trương Ca told his family during their 12 February visit that on 4 February a prison guard brought an inmate from a different cell into his cell who threatened to kill anyone that stepped outside. On their latest visit to prison, the prison authorities told the family that an order to transfer Huỳnh Trương Ca to another facility was coming from the Ministry of Public Security. However, they did not reveal the destination.

In Viet Nam, prison transfer is often applied to prisoners of conscience since it creates more difficulties for families to visit and provide supplies. Prisoners who come from the south are normally transferred to facilities in the north and vice versa.

Angry with the ill-treatment that her father is enduring behind bars, Huỳnh Trương Ca's daughter decided to write about his case on her personal Facebook page. As a result, the local authorities summoned her to a police station where she was forced to unlock her phone and hand it to the officers who then deleted everything she wrote on Facebook. The police further threatened her and told her not to write about her father's story on social media or contact people to ask for their help with his case. Currently, there are more than a hundred prisoners of conscience in Vietnam, many of whom experience torture and other ill-treatment behind bars - including harassment, threats, intimidation or physical assault. The living conditions in prison are harsh; Amnesty International often receives news and reports from families of prisoners of conscience complaining of the poor diet, lack of healthcare, and inadequate clothing during winter time.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [English, Vietnamese]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [19 April 2019]

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Huỳnh Trương Ca [him/he]