

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 41/10/96
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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office /Southeast Asia sub-regional team
Date: 20 December 1996

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Dr NGUYEN Dan Que
Viet Nam

Keywords

Theme: Prisoner of conscience / solitary confinement / ill-health
Profession/association: Doctor / endocrinologist

Summary

Dr Nguyen Dan Que, a 54 year old married endocrinologist, was sentenced in 1991 to 20 years' imprisonment to be followed by five years' house arrest. He was convicted of trying to overthrow the government and, among other charges, of membership of Amnesty International. He has been kept for significant periods of his imprisonment in solitary confinement and has been seriously ill. AI remains concerned for his well-being and is calling again for his unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

Recommended actions

Letters are requested from health professionals to the addresses below. Letters can be in English, French or your own language and should:

- express concern at the continuing imprisonment of Dr Nguyen Dan Que on political charges
- make clear that you are writing solely on the basis of humanitarian concern and adherence by the government to international legal standards including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- seek information on Dr Nguyen Dan Que's current state of health and his present situation.
- urge that he be provided with any necessary medical care and that he be released unconditionally on the grounds that he has committed no recognizable crime

Addresses

Vo Van Kiet
Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Le Minh Huong
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Tran Binh Trong
Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Nguyen Manh Cam
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Please send copies of your letters to: the diplomatic representative of Viet Nam in your country.

And: please forward information on the case of Dr Nguyen Dan Que to your medical association urging that they communicate with the Vietnamese authorities.

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DETAINED PHYSICIAN

Dr NGUYEN Dan Que Viet Nam

Dr Nguyen Dan Que, a 54-year-old married endocrinologist, is serving a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment and five years of house arrest for his peaceful political activities. He has been kept for periods in solitary confinement and has experienced serious ill health in recent years. He is currently believed to be in Z30A prison, Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province, about 60 km [40 miles] northeast of Ho Chi Minh City in southern Viet Nam. Amnesty International has adopted Dr Nguyen Dan Que as a prisoner of conscience and continues to urge the Vietnamese authorities to release him unconditionally.

Background

Dr Nguyen Dan Que was born in 1942 in northern Viet Nam. On graduating in medicine from Saigon University, he joined the staff of the medical school. He specialised in thyroid diseases and diabetes. Under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization he carried out research in Paris, Brussels and London. He returned to Viet Nam in July 1974 and, after the end of the Viet Nam war in 1975, became Director of the Cho-Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

After making criticisms of the direction of national health care policy he was dismissed from his post and, in February 1978, was arrested and accused of "rebelling against the regime" and forming a "reactionary" organization. He was released in 1988 after ten years of detention without trial. Following his release, Dr Nguyen Dan Que joined Amnesty International as an international member and became a founder member of an organization called *Cao Trao Nhan Ban* (High Tide of Humanism Movement) which was established in mid-1990. Its manifesto called for various democratic reforms and Dr Nguyen Dan Que was arrested a month after the publication of the manifesto. He was tried in November 1991 at the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City. He was charged with, among other things, planning to overthrow the government. One of the charges against him was "membership of Amnesty International".

In April 1993 the United Nations Working group on arbitrary detention declared that his detention was arbitrary and in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Viet Nam is a signatory. Amnesty International has issued *Medical Actions* in support of Dr Nguyen Dan Que in October 1993 and February 1995, and is now renewing its appeal for his release.

Dr Nguyen Dan Que has been awarded the Raoul Wallenberg Human Rights Award (1994) and the Robert Kennedy Human Rights Award for 1995. He was represented by his brother, Dr Quan Q. Nguyen, at a reception in his honour (and that of a Turkish physician, Dr Haluk Gerger) organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at their annual meeting in Baltimore in early 1996.