

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH FEARS FOR DETAINED VIETNAMESE BLOGGER

The lawyer and family of popular Vietnamese blogger Nguyen Hoang Hai, also known as Dieu Cay, have not been allowed to visit him in prison for six months. There are concerns for his health, as they have also been prevented from sending him food and medicine. Despite completing a 30-month prison sentence in October 2010, he was detained for further investigation on charges of “conducting propaganda” against the state.

Nguyen Hoang Hai, who is around 60 years old, was last seen by his son at Xuan Loc prison, Dong Nai province in southeast Viet Nam on 19 October 2010. He had almost completed a two and a half year prison sentence for tax fraud, a charge believed to be politically motivated. However, instead, the authorities continued to detain him and the police informed his family that he was being investigated under Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code for “conducting propaganda” against the state.

The lawyer and family of Nguyen Hoang Hai have made 13 requests to visit him since October. They have also attempted to deliver extra provisions for him, including food, medicines and a small amount of money. The police have rejected all the requests. It is not known where he is now being held, how he is being treated or his state of health. His family and friends fear for his safety.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are generally harsh, with poor food and limited health care; prisoners are reliant on additional supplies from their families. In 2009 Nguyen Hoang Hai was held incommunicado for several months after being transferred to a prison further from his home in Ho Chi Minh City, making it difficult for his family to visit him. Political prisoners held incommunicado are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment.

Nguyen Hoang Hai is the co-founder of the independent Free Vietnamese Journalists' club, formed in 2007, and has written articles critical of China's foreign policies with regard to Viet Nam and taken part in peaceful protests. He had publicly criticized government policies before his arrest in April 2008 and spoke out for human rights in Viet Nam in his blogs.

In May 2009, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention deemed his detention arbitrary, with no basis under international law. Nguyen Hoang Hai is a prisoner of conscience.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Vietnamese or your own language:

- Demanding that the authorities release Nguyen Hoang Hai immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on the authorities to allow Nguyen Hoang Hai immediate access to his family, lawyer, and a doctor;
- Urging that he is not tortured or ill-treated in detention.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JUNE 2011 TO:

Minister of Public Security

Le Hong Ha

Ministry of Public Security

44 Yet Kieu Street

Ha Noi

VIET NAM

Fax: + 844 3942 0223

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pham Gia Khiem

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1 Ton That Dam Street

Ba Dinh District, Ha Noi

VIET NAM

Fax: + 844 3823 1872

Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Freedom of expression and association is strictly controlled in Viet Nam. Repression against dissidents has intensified in the last two years, characterized by arrests and trials of political and human rights activists. At least 30 prisoners of conscience are currently serving long prison terms for their peaceful activities. At least 13 peaceful dissidents are known to be detained and awaiting trial.

Bloggers who are critical of government policies are among those activists targeted by the authorities, as well as supporters of Bloc 8406, an internet based pro-democracy movement, and other unauthorized political groups.

The authorities use vaguely worded provisions of the national security section of the 1999 Penal Code to criminalize peaceful dissent. Political activists are commonly charged with “spying”, “conducting propaganda” against the state, and “activities aimed at overthrowing” the state. As well as receiving long prison terms, on release dissidents are also sentenced to periods of up to five years’ house arrest or probation.

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