

PUBLIC

AI index: ASA 41/001/2003

Distrib: PG/SC

To: Health professional members

From: Medical team / Asia program

Date: 31 January 2003

MEDICAL ACTION

Ill-health of Le Chi Quang, prisoner of conscience

Viet Nam

Key words ill-health / prisoner of conscience

Ill-health of Le Chi Quang

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of Le Chi Quang (32), a prisoner of conscience, held in Ba Sao prison camp, Ha Nam Province. Information received since he was given a four-year sentence in November 2002 suggests that he is not receiving adequate medical attention and that his health is deteriorating. At his trial witnesses reported that he appeared ill and "drugged". He is only allowed one visit a month. Le Chi Quang suffers from long-standing kidney disease giving rise to the nephrotic syndrome. Blood tests taken in January 2000 showed high levels of urea (12.9 mmol/l) and cholesterol (12.73 mmol/l). The creatinine level was 101 µmol/l. Le Chi Quang also has a peptic ulcer.

Background information

Le Chi Quang was arrested on 21 February 2002 at an internet café in Ha Noi. He was accused of "offences against the State and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam" after circulating via the Internet information condemning the government's recent border agreement with China. On 8 November 2002 Le Chi Quang was sentenced to four years' imprisonment followed by a further three years of house arrest.

Since the beginning of 2002 the government has arrested several people in a crackdown against dissidents. Regulations restricting access and use of the internet have heightened Amnesty International's concerns about the current climate of repression in Viet Nam. In a 2002 review of Viet Nam's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Human Rights Committee strongly criticized restrictions on freedom of expression and called for Vietnamese domestic law to be brought in line with international legal standards.

Amnesty International considers Le Chi Quang to be a prisoner of conscience, serving a prison sentence solely for the peaceful exercise of his fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association. The organization calls for Le Chi Quang's unconditional release and access to appropriate medical care.

Recommendations

Please write letters in English or French to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- Introducing yourself in your professional capacity and/or as a member of Amnesty International;

- Expressing concern at reports of ill-health, including kidney disease, of Le Chi Quang, held in Ba Sao prison camp, Ha Nam province, and seeking information on his diagnosis, prognosis and treatment;
- Urging the authorities to provide him with access to appropriate medical care in accordance with international standards, including the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*;
- Calling on the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally as he is imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and association.

Addresses

The Director
Ba Sao Prison Camp
Kim Bang District
Phu Ly
Ha Nam Province, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Phan Van Khai
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Le Hong Anh
Minister of Public Security
Ministry of Public Security
15 Tran Binh Trong Street
Hoan Kiem District
Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Uong Chu Luu
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
25A Cat Linh Street
Dong Da District
Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Please send copies of your appeals to diplomatic representatives of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within six weeks of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 31 March 2003, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of actions

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter writing actions. If you write one, two or more letters please send us an e-mail and let us know. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g.

Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org

Thank you