

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical office / Southeast Asia subregional team
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FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTIONS

**Release of
Dr NGUYEN Dan Que [see ASA 41/06/98, 31 March 1998];
NGUYEN Van Thuan [see ASA 41/02/94, 3 March 1994];
DOAN Viet Hoat [see ASA 41/09/93, 2 November 1993]**

**continued imprisonment of nurse
VO Van Pham *alias* VO Thanh Long [see ASA 41/05/97, 4 February 1997]**

VIET NAM

Amnesty International has learned that Dr Nguyen Dan Que, Nguyen Van Thuan and Professor Doan Viet Hoat who were three of 5,219 prisoners set free in an annual Presidential Amnesty for National Day on 2 September 1998. Nine other prisoners of conscience adopted by Amnesty International were also released.

The organization issued its first Medical Letter Writing Action on Dr Nguyen Dan Que, an endocrinologist, in October 1993, two years after he was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment to be followed by five years' house arrest on multiple charges including trying to overthrow the government and membership of Amnesty International. He was a founding member of the High Tide of Humanism Movement, which called for peaceful democratic change in Viet Nam. Despite his deteriorating health, Dr Nguyen Dan Que was repeatedly denied access to adequate medical care in prison, and requests for further action were sent to the health professional network on a regular basis, the last one in March this year. An official request for the release of Dr Nguyen Dan Que and Professor Doan Viet Hoat was also made in a European Parliament resolution on human rights in July 1998. Although asked to leave Viet Nam with his family to resettle in the USA, Dr Nguyen Dan Que has declined to do so. His wife is reported to have said that he is physically weak, and needs treatment for hypertension, a kidney disorder, and stomach ailments.

Nguyen Van Thuan, a writer, poet and former teacher of Vietnamese literature was arrested in November 1990 and sentenced at two separate trials to 10 and 12 years' imprisonment for his involvement with the High Tide of Humanism Movement and Freedom Forum. He had suffered a stroke in February 1994 but it was seven days before he was admitted to hospital. He remained in hospital for treatment until February 1996, when he was returned to the prison camp. Nguyen Van Thuan remains in Viet Nam with members of his family.

Professor Doan Viet Hoat, a 56-year-old writer and academic, was detained in 1990 and sentenced three years later on appeal to a 15-year prison term after being convicted of 'counter-revolutionary' activities, because of his involvement in Freedom Forum, an unofficial group of dissidents who published and circulated amongst themselves a newsletter critical of government policies. According to a Reuters report of 1 September 1998, Doan Viet Hoat was forced into exile by the Vietnamese

authorities after his release: *'I wanted to stay but they did not let me [...]. I love my country. I did not want to leave my own country. I want to contribute to freedom and democracy in my country'*, Professor Doan Viet Hoat said after his arrival in Bangkok. He has been reunited with his family in the United States where he has refugee status.

No further action from the network is required on these three cases, and we would like to thank all those who have appealed on behalf of these prisoners of conscience over the last few years.

No new information however is available on **Vo Van Pham** *alias* **Vo Thanh Long**, a nurse who was arrested in July 1996 and subsequently found guilty of 'participating in the establishment [of an] organization aimed at overthrowing the people's government [and] caus[ing] grave consequences' and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment as well as to two years probation at the end of his prison term. AI believes he is still being held at Z30D/Ka 'reeducation' camp at Ham Tan, Binh Thuan province. He is regarded by AI as a prisoner of conscience.

Letters are requested from health professionals to the addresses given below:

- welcoming the recent amnesties in Viet Nam and expressing your hope that these amnesties will lead to the release of all prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam
- urging the authorities to allow political prisoners who have been released the right to remain within Viet Nam or to emigrate according to their own choice
- stating that Amnesty International considers Vo Van Pham a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of his beliefs and appealing for his immediate and unconditional release
- seeking information on the current place of detention and state of health of Vo Van Pham

ADDRESSES:

Phan Van Khai
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
- Nurses' Associations in your country, enclosing information on the case of Vo Van Pham urging that they communicate with the Vietnamese authorities