

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK OF TORTURE

Woman human rights defender Pham Thi Doan Trang was arrested on 6 October 2020 for her peaceful activism. Facing up to 20 years in prison, she is currently being held incommunicado and is at grave risk of torture. A published author, journalist and organizer, Doan Trang has struggled tirelessly to promote human rights and has inspired a generation of activists in Viet Nam. In recent years, Doan Trang has been subjected to repeated harassment, intimidation and attacks, including incidents of gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, and assault. The Vietnamese authorities must release Pham Thi Doan Trang immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience.

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

Secretary General and State President Nguyễn Phú Trọng

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Your Excellency,

*I am writing to express my grave concern about the recent arrest of **Pham Thi Doan Trang**, who has peacefully advocated for human rights in Viet Nam for many years. I am particularly concerned that she is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment while held incommunicado in Prison Number One in Hanoi.*

Charged under article 117 of the Vietnamese Penal Code, it is alarming that Pham Thi Doan Trang could face up to 20 years in prison simply for writing about human rights and courageously helping to build a Viet Nam in which everyone's human rights are respected. She has worked tirelessly to make that vision a reality.

Unfortunately, instead of receiving protection and support from the Vietnamese authorities, Doan Trang has been subjected to relentless harassment by state security forces. In the past three years, Doan Trang has been arbitrarily detained, threatened, and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in police custody.

Viet Nam has an obligation under international human rights law and also under its own Constitution to protect human rights defenders and ensure they can carry out their work in a safe and enabling environment. Pham Thi Doan Trang's work to promote human rights is both constitutional and in line with the Vietnamese authorities' voluntary international human rights commitments.

Pham Thi Doan Trang is a prisoner of conscience, who has been detained solely for her human rights work. I therefore urge you, the Secretary General and State President, to ensure that:

- **Pham Thi Doan Trang is released immediately and unconditionally;**
- **Pending her release, grant Pham Thi Doan Trang prompt, regular and unrestricted access to adequate medical care, family visits and access to a lawyer of her choice;**
- **Pham Thi Doan Trang is treated in full accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), and is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, including poor conditions of detention and prolonged pre-trial detention.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pham Thi Doan Trang, born in 1978, is a human rights defender, journalist and author from Hanoi, Viet Nam. She was arrested at an apartment in Ho Chi Minh City on the night of 6 October 2020. Authorities later confirmed that she was charged under article 117 of the Vietnamese Penal Code, which punishes the “making, storing, distributing or disseminating information, documents and items against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” If convicted, she may face up to 20 years in prison.

Pham Thi Doan Trang has written and published books on political science and contemporary Vietnamese political developments. She has additionally researched and written numerous reports on human rights issues in Viet Nam. Doan Trang used her influential Facebook account to spotlight and condemn human rights violations and demand justice for victims. In 2001, Doan Trang started her career as a reporter by working for the mainstream media outlet VTC. Thereafter she continued to work for several other mainstream news agencies including VietnamNet TV, VnExpress, New Life Magazine, and the Ho Chi Minh City Legal Daily. During her decade-long journalism career, Doan Trang focused on issues which many reporters avoided due to the strict censorship environment in Viet Nam. In 2009, she was detained for participating in a peaceful movement calling on the government to cancel a mining project which she and others believed to be harmful for the environment and the national interest.

In 2014, Pham Thi Doan Trang received a fellowship to study in the United States where she lobbied to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Viet Nam among US lawmakers. In the same year, Doan Trang co-founded *Luat Khoa Tap Chi*, an independent online magazine focusing on legal and political issues in Viet Nam. After returning to Viet Nam in 2015, she founded Green Tree, a civil society group that opposed the destruction of thousands of old trees in Hanoi. When the Formosa environmental disaster took place, causing the death of hundreds of tons of fish and forcing thousands of fisher people into unemployment, Doan Trang and members of Green Tree documented the situation in affected areas and later released a report.

Pham Thi Doan Trang has written many books. However, the Vietnamese authorities control publication activity so tightly that none of her books could be printed through traditional publishing channels in the country. In 2019, Doan Trang co-founded the Liberal Publishing House, a civil society group focused on publishing uncensored books, especially books that were banned by the government, and included books written by Doan Trang herself.

Pham Thi Doan Trang has faced a relentless barrage of threats, harassment, intimidation, and assault since her return to Viet Nam from the United States. Since 2015, Doan Trang has been arbitrarily detained by Public Security officers more than two dozen times, often to interrogate her regarding her work or to prevent her from attending events. As a result, Doan Trang has had to constantly move from place to place to avoid arrest, never staying at one location longer than a month. Doan Trang has also been tortured by the police. In 2015, she was beaten by plainclothes police while peacefully protesting in Hanoi, leaving her with a permanent disability in her leg. In 2018, while attending a music concert with other activists in Ho Chi Minh City, Doan Trang was arrested, detained and interrogated. Police then dropped her off in the middle of a road at midnight where six unidentified men suddenly attacked her. She suffered serious injuries and was hospitalized after that attack.

Viet Nam is one of the most prolific jailers of peaceful activists in Southeast Asia, where prison conditions are harsh especially for those held for political reasons. Torture and other ill-treatment, including incommunicado detention, prolonged solitary confinement, beating and deliberately withholding medical treatment, are prohibited absolutely under international law but remain common practices of Viet Nam authorities.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [English/Vietnamese]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 2 January 2021

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: [Pham Thi Doan Trang] (she/her)