

URGENT ACTION

GROWING HEALTH FEARS FOR PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Denied proper medical treatment by prison authorities since April 2015, when she was first diagnosed with a tumour on her uterus, Trần Thị Thúy is no longer able to walk without assistance. A prisoner of conscience, she has been detained since her arrest in 2010 and has expressed fears of death due to appalling prison conditions.

Trần Thị Thúy, a Hoa Hao Buddhist and land activist, is serving an eight-year prison sentence after being convicted of “activities aimed at overthrowing” the state, under Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code. She was arrested in August 2010 and is currently detained in An Phước Detention Centre, Bình Dương province.

Following a recent visit, her family have said that the tumour in her uterus continues to grow and, due to the pain, she is no longer able to walk without assistance. Trần Thị Thúy is also suffering from painful boils all over her body that grow slowly to the size of a small rice bowl and burst, emitting blood and pus. At any given time, she has six or seven boils on her body, and as soon as one bursts another grows somewhere else. Despite the real risk of infection, increased by the fact that Trần Thị Thúy sleeps on the floor of her prison cell, prison authorities have refused to give her the medical patches brought by her family to cover the boils.

In addition, her family have repeatedly told the authorities that they are willing to pay for private medical care but this has been refused. The cause of the boils remains unknown and the prison authorities continue to deny her adequate and proper medical treatment for them, as well as the tumour in her uterus.

Trần Thị Thúy’s mental health has improved since she stopped taking medicine provided by the prison authorities. Unlike on previous visits, where she appeared confused and paranoid, her family felt that she had regained mental clarity and was again able to engage in coherent conversation. Trần Thị Thúy has said that she does not know how long she will be able to survive without medical treatment in the appalling conditions of the prison.

Please write immediately in Vietnamese, English or your own language urging authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Trần Thị Thúy as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peaceful activities in defending human rights;
- Immediately provide Trần Thị Thúy with appropriate medical care, in accordance with her wishes, including treatment in hospital, and failing which allow the family to arrange for her health care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MARCH 2017 TO:

Minister of Public Security

To Lam
44 Yết Kiêu St. Hoàn Kiếm District Hà
Nội, Việt Nam
Fax: + 844 3823 1872
Email: ttll.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Salutation: Dear Minister

Prime Minister

Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
Prime Minister’s Office
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Email:
nguoiiphatngonchinhphu@chinhphu.vn

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy
Prime Minister
Phạm Bình Minh
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street, Ba Dinh district
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Fax: + 844 3823 1872
Email: ttll.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 284/15. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/3454/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trần Thị Thúy is not due to be released until August 2018. According to the indictment against her, she and the six other activists with whom she was tried are accused of having joined or been associated with Viet Tan, an overseas-based group which peacefully campaigns for democracy in Viet Nam. She has refused to “confess” to the alleged crimes for which she was convicted, despite the severe hardship she is forced to endure. In September 2011, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted Opinion No 46/2011 which stated that the detention of Trần Thị Thúy and her six co-defendants is arbitrary and should be remedied by their release and compensation.

She and her family are Hoa Hao Buddhists. The family have informed Amnesty International that they are under constant surveillance by police who regularly call to their home to question and intimidate them. They are often prevented from traveling for the purposes of joining religious congregations and have been told by the police they will be arrested if they protest their treatment.

Trần Thị Thúy has been in severe pain since being diagnosed with a tumour in April 2015. She has told her family on numerous occasions that she is afraid that she will die in prison as a result of her medical situation and the refusal of the prison authorities to provide proper and appropriate medical treatment unless she “confesses” to the crimes for which she was convicted.

Despite a three day return journey, due to the long distance between the prison and their home, Trần Thị Thúy’s family bring her food every month. Unable to walk to the area where the food is cooked, she is shouted at and insulted every time she asks for assistance from the prison staff. As a result, she often eats dry, uncooked food. In addition, the medicine brought by her family is locked away by prison authorities and often withheld from her entirely.

The denial of medical treatment in these circumstances, possibly involving the intentional infliction of severe pain and suffering for the purpose of extracting a confession, could amount to torture and, therefore, a violation of the Convention against Torture, which came into force in Viet Nam in February 2015.

Although Viet Nam has ratified the Convention against Torture, insufficient steps have been taken to bring the country into compliance. Amnesty International has documented torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam in a report entitled “*Prisons Within Prisons: Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam*”, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/4187/2016/en/>. Trần Thị Thúy is also included in the list of 84 prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam published in July 2016, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/4389/2016/en/>.

Name: Trần Thị Thúy
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 284/15 Index: ASA 41/5727/2017 Issue Date: 17 February 2017