

PUBLIC

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UA 01/05 Prisoner of conscience/medical concern/torture and ill-treatment

VIET NAM Le Thi Hong Lien (f), teacher, aged 21

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Prisoner of conscience Le Thi Hong Lien is reportedly suffering from severe mental illness in the prison infirmary at Chi Hoa Prison, Ho Chi Minh City. Her condition is said to be deteriorating and she is being denied access to the treatment she needs.

Le Thi Hong Lien, a teacher for the Vietnamese Mennonite Christian Church, was arrested in June 2004 along with a number of other members of the Mennonite community. On 12 November 2004 she was sentenced to 12 months in prison on charges of "resisting a person performing official duty". Amnesty International considers Le Thi Hong Lien to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

In recent months her mental health is reported to have seriously deteriorated. Prison guards reportedly told relatives that they did not have the means to care for inmates with such a severe illness and explained that they have resorted to tying her hands and feet to the bed. She is said to be receiving no treatment for her condition, which is likely to deteriorate further.

During her imprisonment fellow inmates reported that Le Thi Hong Lien has been beaten by prison guards, with a report of a particularly savage beating given to her by a guard escorting her to and from her trial.

Members of the Mennonite Church, and other members of non-state-sanctioned religious organizations, have been subject to imprisonment, house arrest and harassment in Viet Nam for many years. Le Thi Hong Lien has participated in a number of demonstrations against the government's religious policies. She, together with other Mennonite Christians, has been arrested on many occasions and was reportedly hospitalized in 2002 after she was beaten by police whilst in detention. In November 2004 she was tried alongside Mennonite pastor and human rights activist Nguyen Hong Quang. Pastor Quang was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Pastor Quang had been outspoken about the situation of religious freedoms in the Central Highlands for ethnic minority groups, and had defended farmers in land rights cases.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the health of Le Thi Hong Lien, whose condition is said to be deteriorating;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Le Thi Hong Lien is transferred immediately to a specialist medical institution for assessment and treatment of her condition;
- calling for an investigation into reports that she has been beaten by prison guards, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Le Thi Hong Lien as a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister  
His Excellency Phan Van Khai

Office of the Prime Minister  
Hoang Hoa Tham  
Ha Noi  
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

**Fax:** + 844 823 4137 / 199 2682 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark appeals “For the attention of Prime Minister Phan Van Khai”)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

President

President Tran Duc Luong  
Office of the President  
35 Ngo Quyen  
Ha Noi  
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

**Fax:** + 844 199 2682 / 823 4137 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark appeals “For the attention of President Tran Duc Luong”)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 February 2005.