

EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**Nguyen Van Thuan
VIET NAM**

Amnesty International is concerned for Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner of conscience sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment who recently suffered a stroke. He is aged 61. Following his stroke, the prison authorities contacted his family in order that they make arrangements for his medical care. His family succeeded - not without difficulty - in admitting him to hospital, but he has only a 30-day period of medical parole at the end of which he must return to prison camp. There are concerns that he would be without necessary medical attention on his return to prison.

Background

Nguyen Van Thuan is a writer, poet and former teacher of Vietnamese literature. Prior to 1975, the year which saw the end of the Viet Nam war and the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, he was a journalist with two newspapers and the author of biographical works and books on political theory. He is also reported to have worked in the Interior Ministry and in the Department of Information and Returnees in South Viet Nam. Nguyen Van Thuan was arrested in June 1975 at the close of the war and charged with "protecting reactionary elements". He was sent to "re-education" camp where he remained for eight years until his release in August 1983.

In 1990 a political movement known as *Cao Trao Nhan Ban* (High Tide of Humanism movement) was established. Nguyen Van Thuan was involved with this movement which issued a political manifesto highly critical of the Vietnamese Government and calling for non-violent political, social and economic change in Viet Nam. He was also a member of a group known as *Dien Tu Do* (Freedom Forum), which published an unlicensed monthly newsletter containing articles critical of the Government and also advocating political change.

Nguyen Van Thuan has been sentenced in two separate trials in connection with his activities in these two groups. He was arrested on 13 November 1990 together with seven other members of the *Freedom Forum*, but was first tried for his involvement in the *High Tide of Humanism movement*. He was tried together with Dr Nguyen Dan Que, one of the founders of the movement, and sentenced in November 1991 to 10 years' imprisonment (Dr Nguyen Dan Que received a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment.) It was some time before charges were brought against those arrested in connection with the *Freedom Forum*, but in 1992 an article appeared in the official Vietnamese press criticizing the Forum and its newsletter which was described as a "document used by a reactionary group as a most important means of rallying forces to oppose and sabotage our country". Those tried for involvement in the *Freedom Forum* were sentenced on 29 March 1993 on charges of "plotting to overthrow the people's government" and Nguyen Van Thuan received an 18 year sentence. He appealed against his

sentence and this was reduced to 12 years' imprisonment in July 1993 to run concurrently with his earlier sentence.

Nguyen Van Thuan is held at Thuan Hai prison camp in Ham-Tan City, about 150km east of Ho Chi Minh City, where his physical and mental health are reported to have been deteriorating. On 15 February 1994 he suffered a stroke resulting in hemiplegia and the prison authorities contacted his family in order that they arrange his medical care. The family experienced difficulties in obtaining his admission to a civilian hospital, possibly because of his status as a political prisoner, and finally admitted him to a military hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. The prison authorities have given him 30 days in which to convalesce after which time he will be returned to the camp. He is likely to receive very little medical attention on return to prison and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his future well-being.

Amnesty International considers Nguyen Van Thuan to be a prisoner of conscience arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his political views and is calling urgently for his unconditional release from prison.

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To: Medical professionals

From: Medical Office / Research Department - Asia

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MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Nguyen Van Thuan
VIET NAM**

Keywords

Theme: POC/ill-health/medical care

Summary

Nguyen Van Thuan is a 61-year-old prisoner of conscience prosecuted on political charges in two separate trials and who is serving a 12 year prison sentence. In mid-February 1994 he suffered a stroke and, although admitted to hospital, is due to return to prison camp shortly. Please see the details attached.

Recommended Actions

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

- expressing concern for the well-being of Nguyen Van Thuan who suffered a stroke in Thuan Hai labour camp in February 1994, noting that he has been given a 30-day period in which to convalesce
- seeking information on the medical facilities available at Thuan Hai camp and on the medical care likely to be available to him on his return to prison from hospital
- seeking assurances that he will be given the opportunity to benefit from all the medical and rehabilitative care he requires
- urging his release from prison on the grounds that he was imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of opinion and was not engaged in any violent crime or activity

Addresses

Nguyen Trong Nhan
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
138A Giang Vo
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Vo Van Kiet
Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Than St.
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Copies to diplomatic representatives of Vietnam in your country.