

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 41/99 (ASA 41/02/99, 12 March 1999) - Fear for safety/possible prisoner of conscience

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM Nguyen Thanh Giang, aged 63

The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has confirmed the arrest of Nguyen Thanh Giang, stating that he has violated Article 205A of the Penal Code. According to unofficial sources, he is now detained in a police detention centre in the capital, Ha Noi. His family have been allowed to take him food, but have not been allowed to meet with him.

Nguyen Thanh Giang, a geologist and writer who has been publicly critical of the ruling Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) for at least 10 years, was arrested on 4 March 1999. Article 205A of the Penal Code provides for imprisonment for up to three years for abusing "*freedom of speech, of the press or of religion...or other democratic rights to encroach upon the interests of the State...*"

Although he has been officially charged, no information has been made public about when he will be brought to trial. If he is convicted and imprisoned he will be adopted as a prisoner of conscience, with Amnesty International groups working for his release.

No further action is required by the Urgent Action Network at this time. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.