

PUBLIC

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Death pen

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM Nguyen Van Tam

Nguyen Van Quyêt (alias Tran Xuan Dung)

Ngo Van Doan

Pham Van Tuan

Nguyen Xuan Toan

Pham Ngoc Dinh

Tran Ngoc Quynh

Luong Thanh Binh

Luong Van Chu

Hoang Kim Hoan (f)

The ten condemned prisoners named above had their appeals rejected on 22 September. They have seven days to apply for clemency from the President, which is now their only hope of escaping a firing squad. Other prisoners whose appeals for presidential clemency have been rejected, have been executed within a month.

They were among 22 people convicted of trafficking 289kg of opium and 259.5kg of heroin between 1992 and 1998. The gang's alleged ringleader, Nguyen Van Tam, was sentenced to death by Nam Dinh City People's Court in June 2000, together with 10 of his alleged accomplices, after a two-week trial. The city's Court of Appeal has now upheld 10 of the death sentences, but has commuted the death sentence imposed on Luong Van Chinh because of his cooperation with the authorities. Such commutations are extremely rare.

The remaining 11 alleged gang members were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 18 years to life.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is an optional punishment for 29 offenses in Viet Nam, including crimes against national security, murder and economic offenses such as fraud and embezzlement.

The authorities do not regularly make public information about death sentences and executions. However, it was officially reported that a record number of 194 death sentences were imposed in 1999; information about executions is rarely published. From January to September 2000 Amnesty International has recorded, from media sources, the imposition of 31 death sentences and eight executions. The true numbers are believed to be much higher. The majority of these cases have involved drug trafficking offenses, reflecting the authorities' campaign against increasing drug-related social problems.

Executions are carried out by firing squad, reportedly often in public. Relatives are not informed beforehand, but are asked to collect executed prisoners' belongings two to three days afterwards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or French or your own language:

- urging commutation of the death sentences imposed on Nguyen Van Tam, Nguyen Van Quyêt alias Tran Xuan Dung, Ngo Van Doan, Pham Van Tuan, Nguyen Xuan Toan, Pham Ngoc Dinh, Tran Ngoc Quynh, Luong Thanh Binh, Luong Van Chu, and Hoang Kim Hoan (f);

- urging the authorities to place an immediate moratorium on all executions in line with international standards and United Nations recommendations to all countries to move towards abolition of the death penalty;
- stating that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- stating that there is no clear evidence that the death penalty has any identifiable deterrent effect against serious crime.

APPEALS TO:

President Tran Duc Luong
Office of the President
35 Ngo Quyen
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Telegrams: President, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Faxes: + 844 823 4137 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Dear President

Prime Minister Phan Van Khai
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Faxes: + 844 823 4137 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

COPIES TO:

Le Minh Huong
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Tran Binh Trong
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Faxes: + 844 826 0773 (If voice answers, ask for fax)

and 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 9 November 2000.