

PUBLIC

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Further Information UA 01/05 (ASA 41/001/2005, 7 January 2005) – Prisoner of conscience/medical concern/torture and ill treatment

VIET NAM

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

Prisoner of conscience Le Thi Hong Lien, who is reportedly suffering from severe mental illness, has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, where she is reportedly receiving treatment for the first time. Her family have been able to visit her but have reported that her physical and mental health is still very poor. Amnesty International is concerned that she may not be receiving appropriate medical treatment.

She had been held at Chi Hoa Prison, in Ho Chi Minh City, since her arrest in June 2004, when she was arrested. Her mental health is reported to have deteriorated seriously since her arrest. Guards at Chi Hoa Prison reportedly told her relatives that they did not have the means to care for inmates with such a severe illness. On 25 January the prison authorities finally acknowledged that Le Thi Hong Lien was suffering from mental illness. On 17 February she was moved to another prison distant from her family home. Ten days later she was moved from there to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, 50km northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, where she is reportedly held in the prison section under the charge of prison guards rather than medical staff.

Le Thi Hong Lien was beaten by guards while she was held at Chi Hoa Prison, according to fellow inmates, and received a particularly savage beating from a guard escorting her to and from her trial.

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 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. Members of the Mennonite Church, and other religious organizations that are not sanctioned by the state, have suffered official harassment and imprisonment for many years. Le Thi Hong Lien had taken part in a number of demonstrations against the government's policies on religion, and had been arrested many times.

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

- welcoming the news that Le Thi Hong Lien has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, but expressing concern that she may not be receiving appropriate treatment;
- expressing concern that she is currently in the prison wing of the hospital and that her carers reportedly are prison staff, not medical staff;
- urging the authorities to ensure that she receives the medical attention she needs;
- calling on the authorities to order an investigation into reports that she was beaten by guards at Chi Hoa Prison, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for Le Thi Hong Lien to be released immediately and unconditionally, as she is 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
+ 844199 2682 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark appeals “For the
attention of Prime Minister Phan Van Khai”)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minster of Public Security
His Excellency Le Hong Anh
Ministry of Public Security
15 Tran Binh Trong Street
Hoan Kiem District
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Fax: + 844 8260774
+ 844 8260773

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 27 May 2005.