

URGENT ACTION

VIETNAMESE PRIEST FALLS SERIOUSLY ILL IN PRISON

Imprisoned pro-democracy activist and Catholic priest Father Nguyen Van Ly suffered a suspected stroke on 14 November in Viet Nam. He is conscious but paralyzed on one side. He has been moved to a prison hospital in the Vietnamese capital, Ha Noi. He may be returned to prison, where he would not receive adequate medical treatment for a potentially life-threatening condition.

Father Nguyen Van Ly, who is 63 years old, has been moved from Ba Sao prison, in Ha Nam province, northern Viet Nam, where he has been held in solitary confinement since March 2007, to Prison Hospital 198, administered by the Ministry of Public Security in Ha Noi. Five prison officers are guarding his room, and they only allow family members to see him in order to give him additional care, including by providing him with changes of clothing and food. Sources in Viet Nam say that Father Ly is undergoing medical tests. While in prison he has suffered from high blood pressure and other health problems. He has been ill a number of times in the last six months, including an incident when he fell and hit his head and was unable to stand up, and also had temporary loss of movement on one side of his body. He recovered despite receiving inadequate medical treatment at Ba Sao prison.

Father Ly is a Catholic priest and activist for human rights and democracy. In March 2007 he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for "conducting propaganda" against the state. He was accused of involvement in the internet-based pro-democracy movement Bloc 8406, which he co-founded in April 2006, and taking part in the establishment of banned political groups. He also secretly published a dissident journal, Tu Do Ngon Luan (Freedom and Democracy).

Since Father Ly was first jailed for his activism in the late 1970s, he has spent some 17 years as a prisoner of conscience, detained for calling for respect for human rights and freedom of expression, and criticizing government policies on religion.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Vietnamese or your own language:

- Expressing grave concern that if Father Ly is returned to prison after suffering a suspected stroke, he would not receive all the medical care he needs, and his life would be at risk;
- Urging the authorities to allow Father Ly's family frequent access to him in the prison hospital;
- Calling on the authorities to urgently release Father Ly into the care of his family so that they can arrange immediate provision of independent professional medical care and hospital treatment;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that he is released unconditionally and not returned to prison.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 05 JANUARY 2010 TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pham Gia Khiem

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1 Ton That Dam Street

Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi

Viet Nam

Fax: + 8443 823 1872

Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Public Security

Le Hong Anh

Ministry of Public Security

44 Yet Kieu Street

Ha Noi

Viet Nam

Fax: + 8443 942 0223

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Viet Nam accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

VIETNAMESE PRIEST FALLS SERIOUSLY ILL IN PRISON

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Freedom of expression and association is strictly controlled in Viet Nam. Dissidents who are critical of government policies and speak out about human rights violations face a range of sanctions to silence them. At least 30 dissidents have received long prison sentences, since a series of arrests began in 2006 after a short-lived period of official tolerance of increased web-based activism challenging the government. Another wave of arrests began in May 2009, and nine activists have recently been sentenced after unfair trials.

Law enforcement agencies arbitrarily use the Penal Code to stifle and criminalize peaceful dissent, in breach of international human rights treaties that Viet Nam has ratified. Restrictions and regulations on internet use penalize freedom of expression on topics deemed sensitive, including human rights and advocacy of democracy. Recent regulations on blogging enacted in December 2008 restrict content to personal matters, and prohibit dissemination of anti-government material, and “undermining national security”.

UA: 313/09 Index: ASA 41/009/2009 Issue Date: 24 November 2009

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

