

PUBLIC

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UA 273/03 Prisoner of conscience/health concern

VIET NAM Le Chi Quang (m), aged 32

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of prisoner of conscience Le Chi Quang. His chronic kidney disease has reportedly deteriorated, and he is unable to receive the specialist medical attention that he needs.

Le Chi Quang is reportedly held in difficult conditions in Ba Sao prison camp, Nam Ha Province, in northern Viet Nam. He has suffered from kidney disease since childhood, but poor nutrition and lack of sufficient medical care has almost certainly exacerbated his condition. According to reports, his health has now deteriorated to the point where he is having difficulties speaking and is extremely tired. He has also allegedly lost a great deal of weight during the last few weeks. He is also said to be suffering from peptic ulcer disease.

The prison authorities have reportedly allowed Le Chi Quang's family to bring him medicine, but they are only allowed to visit him once a month. An independent doctor was recently permitted to examine Le Chi Quang, and was said to be "very worried" by his condition.

Le Chi Quang was arrested on 21 February 2002 at an internet café in the capital Ha Noi. He was accused of "offences against the State and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam" after circulating via the Internet information condemning the government's recent border agreement with China. On 8 November 2002 Le Chi Quang was sentenced to four years' imprisonment followed by a further three years of house arrest. Amnesty International considers Le Chi Quang to be a prisoner of conscience, serving a prison sentence solely for the peaceful exercise of his fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the beginning of 2002 the government has arrested several people in a crackdown against dissidents. Regulations restricting access and use of the internet have heightened Amnesty International's concerns about the current climate of repression in Viet Nam. In a 2002 review of Viet Nam's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the United Nations Human Rights Committee strongly criticized restrictions on freedom of expression and called for Vietnamese domestic law to be brought in line with international legal standards.

Detainees in Viet Nam's prisons and prison camps usually live under very poor conditions. They receive inadequate health care, diet and sanitation, and may be held in solitary confinement or in very overcrowded conditions. In prison camps they are also often required to carry out manual labour.

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

- expressing concern for the health of Le Chi Quang, whose serious kidney condition is said to be deteriorating;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Le Chi Quang is transferred immediately to a specialist medical institution for assessment and treatment of his kidney condition;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Le Chi Quang as a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Phan Van Khai Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Telegram: Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Fax: + 844 823 4137/ 199 2682 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark appeals "For the attention of Prime Minister Phan Van Khai")
Salutation: Your Excellency

President Tran Duc Luong
Office of the President
35 Ngo Quyen
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Telegram: President, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Fax: + 844 199 2682 / 823 4137 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark appeals "For the attention of President Tran Duc Luong")
Salutation: Dear President

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 3 November 2003.