

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Viet Nam: Time to live up to human rights commitments and release all prisoners of conscience**

Amnesty International welcomes the release of blogger and prisoner of conscience Ta Phong Tan on 19 September 2015, after she served four years of a 10 year prison sentence. Ta Phong Tan is now in the USA, where she was flown immediately after leaving Prison No. 5 in Thanh Hoa province. Viet Nam must follow this with the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and end its persecution of peaceful activists, journalists and human rights defenders.

Ta Phong Tan's release appears to have been dependent on her transfer to the USA, where she is now effectively in exile. This follows the similar treatment of her colleague Nguyen Van Hai, more commonly known by his blogging name, Dieu Cay ("peasant's pipe"). He also was granted early release from his 12 year prison sentence and immediately flown to the USA in October 2014.

Unjustly imprisoning and then effectively sending people to exile in another country is incompatible with a real commitment to uphold human rights. As noted in the 28 August 2015 letter of Amnesty International's Secretary General, Salil Shetty, to Viet Nam's President, the government must ensure that peaceful activists, human rights defenders, journalists and other individuals are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, harassment, intimidation, arrest, prosecution and imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

Only when this is achieved will Viet Nam be in compliance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights law and standards, including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### Background

Ta Phong Tan was arrested in September 2011 solely because she peacefully exercised her right to freedom of expression. A former policewoman, Ta Phong Tan was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in September 2012, with five years' house arrest on release. She was convicted under Article 88 of Viet Nam's Penal Code for "conducting propaganda" against the state. She and Nguyen Van Hai are founders of the independent Free

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<sup>1</sup> See letter calling for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/2296/2015/en/>,

Journalists' Club of Viet Nam in 2007 which aimed to encourage freedom of expression as an alternative to state-controlled media.

Ta Phong Tan is well known for her blog called Conglysuthat ("Justice and Truth") which included articles on social injustice, human rights abuses and national sovereignty. During pre-trial detention, Ta Phong Tan's mother, Dang Thi Kim Lieng, died after setting fire to herself out of despair at harassment of her family and her daughter's treatment; Ta Phong Tan was not allowed to attend the funeral. While in prison, Ta Phong Tan went on hunger strike three times to protest against harsh conditions and abusive treatment in prison, most recently for 23 days in May-June 2015.

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Public document\*\*\*\*\*