

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 41/06/98

Distrib: PG/SC/CO

To: Health professionals  
From: Medical Office /Southeast Asia sub-regional team  
Date: 31 March 1998

### ***MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION***

**Dr NGUYEN Dan Que**

**Viet Nam**

[Further information on AI Index: ASA 41/10/97, 1 July 1997]

#### **Keywords**

Theme: Prisoner of conscience / ill-health/ medical care

Profession/association: Doctor / endocrinologist

#### **Summary**

Dr Nguyen Dan Que, an endocrinologist in his mid-50s, was arrested in 1990 and sentenced in 1991 to 20 years' imprisonment to be followed by five years' house arrest. He was convicted of trying to overthrow the government and, among other charges, of membership of Amnesty International. A recent medical report records an elevated blood pressure reading which suggests that this should be brought under control. Please see the information attached.

#### **Recommended actions**

Letters are requested from health professionals to the addresses below. If you have written on behalf of Nguyen Dan Que on previous occasions, you could mention this. Letters can be in English, French or your own language and should:

- express concern at the continuing imprisonment of Dr Nguyen Dan Que on political charges
- make clear that you are writing solely on the basis of humanitarian concern and adherence by the government to international legal standards including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- seek information on Dr Nguyen Dan Que's current state of health, noting that he is known to have elevated blood pressure and asking whether he receives medication to control this; you could also mention that he is known to have had problems with a bleeding duodenal ulcer and ask whether this has been brought under control
- urge that he be provided with any necessary medical care and that he be released unconditionally on the grounds that he has committed no recognizable crime

#### **Addresses**

Phan Van Khai  
Prime Minister  
Hoang Hoa Tham  
Ha Noi  
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Le Minh Huong  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Tran Binh Trong  
Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Nguyen Manh Cam  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
1 Ton That Dam  
Ha Noi  
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

**Please send copies of your letters to:** the diplomatic representative of Viet Nam in your country.

**And:** please forward information on the case of Dr Nguyen Dan Que to your medical association urging that they communicate with the Vietnamese authorities. Please inform us of any initiatives undertaken by your professional association.

PUBLIC

AI Index : ASA 41/06/98

Distr : PG/SG

Date: 31 March 1998

**DETAINED PHYSICIAN**  
**(Follow-up to ASA 41/10/97 - 1 July 1997)**  
**Dr NGUYEN Dan Que**  
**Viet Nam**

Amnesty International is renewing appeals for Dr Nguyen Dan Que, a married endocrinologist in his mid-fifties who is adopted as a prisoner of conscience and for whom a number of medical actions have been issued, most recently in July 1997. He has a history of a duodenal ulcer and hypertension and a medical report recently received indicates that his blood pressure is still very elevated, suggesting that it may be uncontrolled medically.

Dr Nguyen Dan Que is serving a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment and five years of house arrest for his peaceful political activities. He has been kept for periods in solitary confinement and is reported to have experienced ill health in recent years. He is held in Z30A prison camp, Xuan Loc in Dong Nai Province, about 60 km [40 miles] northeast of Ho Chi Minh City in southern Viet Nam. Z30A camp is a large complex with several buildings and it is thought that Dr Nguyen Dan Que is held in a part of the camp where the regime is stricter than in others.

A medical report dated 9 January 1998 which was provided to a US congressman by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry states that his blood pressure on examination was 250/110 and his pulse rate 105 per minute. While the report mentions a "history of duodenal ulcer", it makes no mention of whether this had been controlled and in 1997 Amnesty International had information that his ulcer was causing him problems. It was thought he may have recurrent bleeding. He was also said at that time to appear aged and to have lost several teeth. The report of his examination is too sparse in detail to give any clear picture of his present state. It gave no recommendations for treatment or any indication of changes in his conditions.

### **Background**

Dr Nguyen Dan Que was born in 1942 in northern Viet Nam. On graduating in medicine from Saigon University, he joined the staff of the medical school. He specialised in thyroid diseases and diabetes. Under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization he carried out research in Paris, Brussels and London. He returned to Viet Nam in July 1974 and, after the end of the Viet Nam war in 1975, became Director of the Cho-Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

After making criticisms of the direction of national health care policy he was dismissed from his post and, in February 1978, was arrested and accused of "rebellious against the regime" and forming a "reactionary" organization. He was released in 1988 after ten years of detention without trial. Following his release, Dr Nguyen Dan Que joined Amnesty International as an international member and became a founder member of an organization called *Cao Trao Nhan*

*Ban* (High Tide of Humanism Movement) which was established in mid-1990. Its manifesto called for various democratic reforms and Dr Nguyen Dan Que was arrested a month after the publication of the manifesto. He was tried in November 1991 at the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City. He was charged with, among other things, planning to overthrow the government. One of the charges against him was "membership of Amnesty International".

In April 1993 the United Nations Working group on arbitrary detention declared that his detention was arbitrary and in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Viet Nam is a signatory.

Amnesty International continues to call on the Vietnamese authorities for Dr Nguyen Dan Que's unconditional release and is seeking information on whether he is receiving adequate medical attention and appropriate medication.