

URGENT ACTION

VIETNAMESE PRISONER HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Nguyen Hoang Hai, a male prisoner of conscience who blogged under the name Dieu Cay, has been transferred to a remote prison in Viet Nam and denied visitors for several months. No-one has heard from him during that time, and police have warned his family against speaking publicly. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Nguyen Hoang Hai, aged 57, was arrested in April 2008 and sentenced the following September to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment for tax fraud. The charges against him are believed to be politically motivated. He had been interrogated 15 times before officers from the Internal Security and Counter-Espionage Department of the Ministry of Public Security arrested him. In May 2009, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention deemed his detention arbitrary, with no basis under international law.

Nguyen Hoang Hai is the co-founder of the independent Free Vietnamese Journalists' Club, formed in 2007, and has written articles critical of China's foreign policies. He also took part in a peaceful protest before the Olympic Torch passed through Ho Chi Minh City in April 2008. He publicly criticized policies of the Vietnamese government before his arrest and spoke out for human rights in Viet Nam in his blogs.

In April 2009, Nguyen Hoang Hai was transferred to Cai Tau prison, at the southern-most tip of Viet Nam, and more than nine hours' journey from his home in Ho Chi Minh City. According to sources in Viet Nam, Nguyen Hoang Hai's family has been refused permission to visit him since June 2009. No-one has heard from Nguyen Hoang Hai in recent months.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are generally harsh, and provision of health care is limited. Some political prisoners are held incommunicado and therefore vulnerable to ill-treatment and torture.

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

- Calling on the authorities to allow Nguyen Hoang Hai immediate access to his family, lawyer and any medical treatment he may need;
- Urging that he is not tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- Demanding that the authorities release Nguyen Hoang Hai immediately and unconditionally.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Public Security

Le Hong Anh
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: + 844 3942 0223

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pham Gia Khiem
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh District
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: + 844 3823 1872
Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn
Salutation: Dear Minister

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**



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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. These include surveillance by local police, restrictions on movement, interference with home utilities such as phone lines and internet access, arbitrary questioning and detention by police, arrest and imprisonment. There are also cases where authorities have used arbitrary detention in mental health institutions against outspoken critics and activists.

At least 30 dissidents have been handed down long prison sentences, since a series of arrests began in 2006 after a short-lived period of tolerance to increased web-based activism challenging the government. Another wave of arrests began in May 2009. At least 12 dissidents are held in pre-trial detention.

The law enforcement agencies arbitrarily use provisions in the national security section of 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”.

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