

EXTERNAL

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Date: 18 October 1993

MEDICAL CONCERN

**Dr Nguyen Dan Que
VIET NAM**

Dr Nguyen Dan Que is an adopted prisoner of conscience who was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and five years of house arrest after a trial on 29 November 1992. He was formally charged under Article 73 of the Criminal Code with "activities aimed at overthrowing the people's government"; the charges were the result of a political manifesto issued in May 1990 by a movement of which he was a founder member and which was highly critical of the government.

Dr Nguyen Dan Que has previously spent ten years in prison after arrest in 1978 for criticism of the government and was also adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International at that time; he was never brought to trial during this ten-year period.

Dr Dan Que is reported to suffer from hypertension and a bleeding gastric ulcer, but is still reported at intervals to be required to undertake hard labour. Reports received in September this year suggest that he has now been placed in solitary confinement. It is not known what medical treatment he is receiving.

Background

Dr Nguyen Dan Que was born in 1942 in northern Viet Nam, studied medicine at Saigon University and, on graduation, joined the teaching staff of the University medical school. He specialized in thyroid disease and diabetes and, under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization, undertook research in Paris, Brussels (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and London (Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital). He returned from London to Viet Nam in July 1974 and, after the end of the Viet Nam war in mid-1975, became Director of Cho-Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. He reportedly became disillusioned with the new government's policies on health care and expressed his criticisms openly. This led to his dismissal as hospital director and in February 1978 he was arrested and accused of "rebellious against the regime" and forming a "reactionary" organization named National Front for Progress. He was released in 1988 after ten years of untried detention.

Following his release, Dr Nguyen Dan Que became a founder member of a political movement established in 1990 under the name of the *Cao Trao Nhan Ban* (High Tide of Humanism Movement). On 11 May 1990 this organization issued a manifesto calling on individuals both in Viet Nam and abroad to sign a petition demanding non-violent political, social and economic change for Viet Nam, including the introduction of a multi-party system of government. Dr Dan Que was arrested one month later on 14 June 1990. He had also become an international member of Amnesty International in January 1990.

Dr Nguyen Dan Que was brought to trial on 29 November 1991 at the People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City. He was accused of carrying out propaganda against the government, recruiting followers to his movement and planning to overthrow the government. It was stated that thousands of copies of documents prepared by Dr Nguyen Dan Que were found at his home encouraging the Vietnamese people to overthrow the government and build a "nation with human rights as the base". It appears that at his trial he did not have access to independent legal counsel of his choice.

Since his imprisonment in 1990, Dr Dan Que has been repeatedly moved from prison to prison. He is currently held in a prison camp in Dong Nai province (Z 30 A-KG, Xuan-Loc). After receiving reports that Dr Nguyen Dan Que had been placed in solitary confinement, Amnesty International wrote to the Vietnamese authorities to establish whether this was the case and, if so, what were the reasons. In August 1993 a US senator visiting Viet Nam had requested a visit with Dr Dan Que. Although originally agreed, the meeting did not take place and was cancelled at the last minute.

Amnesty International considers Nguyen Dan Que to be a prisoner of conscience arrested solely for the non-violent exercise of fundamental human rights and appeals to the Government of Viet Nam for his immediate and unconditional release.

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The United Nations' Working Group on arbitrary detention has examined Nguyen Dan Que's case and at its April 1993 session declared his detention to be arbitrary and in contravention of articles within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Asia
Date: 18 October 1993

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Dr Nguyen Dan Que
VIET NAM**

Keywords

Theme: Prisoner of conscience/ solitary confinement/ ill-health

Profession/association: Doctor

Summary

Please see the details attached about the imprisonment of Dr Nguyen Dan Que, an adopted prisoner of conscience sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Reports recently received suggest that Dr Dan Que has now been placed in solitary confinement. He suffers from hypertension and a bleeding gastric ulcer.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below:

- expressing concern at the continuing imprisonment of Dr Nguyen Dan Que and at recent reports that he has been placed in solitary confinement as a punitive measure
- asking the reasons for such a punishment
- noting that Dr Nguyen Dan Que is reported to suffer from hypertension and a gastric ulcer and seeking assurances that he is being provided with all the medical attention and treatment he requires
- urging his unconditional release from prison as he was arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights

Addresses

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