

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Vietnam: Amnesty International urges release of prisoners of conscience**

Amnesty International welcomes Viet Nam's active engagement in the UPR as well as its expressed commitment to promote and protect human rights.

Amnesty International regrets, however, Viet Nam's rejection of important recommendations, including to repeal or amend national security laws of the 1999 Penal Code inconsistent with international law; to remove other restrictions on dissent, debate, political opposition, and freedoms of expression and assembly; and to release prisoners of conscience.<sup>1</sup>

Several states emphasised the need to reform law and practice to protect freedoms of assembly and expression, including on the Internet, so that no one is subject to criminal prosecution for acts protected under international human rights law binding on Vietnam. Many states also called on Viet Nam to allow independent media and civil society. These recommendations were regrettably rejected by Viet Nam. Amnesty International strongly urges the government to reconsider these recommendations to match its expressed commitment to human rights with corresponding action.

Amnesty International is concerned that several prisoners of conscience are detention, including human rights lawyers Nguyen Van Dai and Le Thi Cong Nhan, and Catholic priest Father Nguyen Van Ly.

Since the review in May 2009, the Vietnamese authorities have arrested several individuals under the vaguely worded national security laws. Lawyers, activists and business people have been detained for trying to organise peaceful demonstrations, sharing information on the Internet and publishing articles critical of government policies. Among those arrested are well-known lawyer Le Cong Dinh, blogger Nguyen Tien Trung, former army officer Tran Anh Kim and businessman Tran Huynh Duy Thuc. Viet Nam must immediately and unconditionally release these and other prisoners of conscience.

Finally, Amnesty International regrets that Viet Nam did not support recommendations to adopt a moratorium on executions; to reduce the number of crimes punishable by death; and to lift the secrecy surrounding the application of the death penalty, including by making public all information about the imposition and use of the death penalty. The organization urges Viet Nam to reconsider these recommendations with a view to taking steps towards abolishing the death penalty.

#### **Background**

The 12<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council on 24 September 2009 adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Vietnam. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic review, Viet Nam, A/HRC/12/11, paragraph 102 and its Addendum

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International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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