

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 41/015/2004 (Public)  
News Service No: 179  
15 July 2004

## **Viet Nam: Another elderly dissident to be brought to trial**

Yet another elderly dissident, an Amnesty International member, is to be brought to trial next week in Ho Chi Minh City. Dr Nguyen Dan Que, 62, a distinguished doctor, former hospital director and long-standing human rights activist, will be tried on Monday 19 July having spent 16 months in detention in Ho Chi Minh City.

"Why do the Vietnamese authorities lock up, for years at a time, distinguished old men for nothing more than speaking their minds?" Amnesty International asked today. "Dr Nguyen Dan Que should never have been arrested and must be released immediately and without conditions."

Dr Que was arrested on 17 March 2003 outside his home in Ho Chi Minh City while on the way to an Internet café. It is believed that his arrest was prompted by a statement he issued on 13 March asserting that there was no freedom of information in Viet Nam. The statement was circulated via the Internet and published outside Viet Nam.

Dr Que was initially held incommunicado and only in recent months has his wife been allowed to meet him in prison. He is in bad health and is known to be suffering from kidney stones, a bleeding ulcer and high blood pressure that requires medication.

"Dr Nguyen Dan Que -- a winner of numerous international human rights awards -- has worked tirelessly to defend the fundamental human rights of his fellow Vietnamese. His repeated imprisonment is both a personal and national tragedy," Amnesty International added.

Amnesty International understands that he is to be charged with "abusing democratic rights to jeopardize the interests of the State" -- the same charge levelled against two other elderly dissidents, who were brought to trial in the last two weeks. Dr Nguyen Dan Que has not been permitted to meet with a lawyer and his family have not been given a formal charge sheet detailing the accusations against him. It is likely, therefore, that he will have no legal defence at his trial.

Amnesty International is calling on the Vietnamese authorities to ensure that Dr Que's trial meets with international fair trial standards and is open to outside observers.

### **Background**

Dr Que has previously been imprisoned twice, for a total of 18 years. In February 1978, he was arrested and accused of "rebelling against the regime" and forming a "reactionary organization named the National Front of Progress". He was released in 1988 after 10 years of imprisonment without trial.

He was arrested again in June 1990 after he founded *the Cao Trao Nhan Ban* (High Tide of Humanism Movement) that called for democratic change. He also became a member of Amnesty International, which was used as an accusation against him. In November 1991, he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for "activities aimed at overthrowing the People's Government." He was released under

a special amnesty in September 1998. On both occasions, Dr Que was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>