

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DENIED MEDICAL CARE

Vietnamese human rights defender Bùi Thị Minh Hằng is being denied medical treatment for various health problems, despite repeated requests. She is serving a three-year sentence on fabricated charges of “causing public disorder”.

Bùi Thị Minh Hằng, imprisoned since February 2014, is in poor health. She has a painful stomach ulcer, low blood pressure, joint pain, frequent severe headaches and occasional blackouts. Despite repeated requests, she has received no medical treatment, and her health is at risk of deteriorating further.

Bùi Thị Minh Hằng was arrested on 11 February 2014 as she travelled with a group of 20 others to visit human rights lawyer Nguyễn Bắc Truyển, who had been attacked and detained for interrogation by police on 9 February in Dong Thap province. The group were travelling on motorbikes from Ho Chi Minh City when they were stopped by traffic police about 10 km from their destination. They were then attacked by a large group of security officials and other unidentified men and beaten with truncheons and other weapons, before being arrested and taken to Lap Vo police station for interrogation. On 12 February Bùi Thị Minh Hằng and two others were charged with causing “serious obstruction to traffic...” under Article 245 of the Penal Code; 18 others were released. They were tried on 26 August 2014 by Dong Thap Provincial People’s Court, and Bùi Thị Minh Hằng was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment. The sentence was upheld on appeal.

Bùi Thị Minh Hằng is an outspoken activist, well-known in Viet Nam for her participation in peaceful anti-China protests over the long-running territorial disputes in the South China/East Sea. She has also helped victims of land confiscation, disseminating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to communities and extending support to other human rights activists. She is currently detained at Gia Trung Prison in Gia Lai province in the Central Highlands, some 1,000 km from where her family lives, making visits very difficult.

Please write immediately in English, Vietnamese or your own language:

- Demanding the authorities release Bùi Thị Minh Hằng immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for her peaceful activities defending human rights;
- Urge the authorities that while still detained, she should be immediately provided with appropriate medical care, and treated in accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Offenders, including access to family and doctors.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 MARCH 2016 TO:

Minister of Public Security

Gen Tran Dai Quang

Ministry of Public Security

44 Yet Kieu Street, Hoan Kiem district

Ha Noi, Viet Nam

Online contact form:

http://www.mps.gov.vn/web/guest/contact_english

t_english

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pham Binh Minh

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

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bùi Thị Minh Hằng has twice undertaken a hunger strike during her imprisonment. Firstly in pre-trial detention when she was held incommunicado from the time of her arrest on 11 February until the end of March when she was allowed to meet her son and a lawyer. Then in April 2015, in protest at abusive treatment by prison guards and harassment by other prisoners.

Amnesty International considers Bùi Thị Minh Hằng to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression. The charges brought against her and her co-defendants are fabricated and politically-motivated. Unprovoked physical attacks by security officers, plain-clothed police and unidentified men against activists have become more frequent. No one has been held accountable, despite complaints having been made by victims of attacks to the authorities.

Viet Nam is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. However, these rights are severely restricted in law and practice in Viet Nam. Vaguely worded articles in the national security section of Viet Nam's 1999 Penal Code and Article 258 (Abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and/or citizens) are frequently used to criminalize peaceful dissenting views or activities. In some cases, baseless charges against peaceful activists are fabricated, such as Article 161 for "tax evasion" and Article 245 for "causing public disorder". Those at risk include people advocating for peaceful political change, criticizing government policies, or calling for respect for human rights. Dozens of bloggers, labour rights and land rights activists, political activists, religious followers, human rights defenders and social justice activists, and even song writers are currently imprisoned for their peaceful activism.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are harsh, with inadequate food and health care that falls short of the minimum requirements set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules and other international standards. Prisoners of conscience have been held in solitary confinement as a punishment or in isolation for lengthy periods. They have also been subjected to ill-treatment, including beatings by other prisoners with no intervention by prison guards. Some prisoners of conscience are frequently moved from one detention facility to another, often without their families being informed. Several prisoners of conscience have undertaken hunger strikes in protest at abusive treatment and poor conditions of detention.

Name: Bùi Thị Minh Hằng

Gender m/f: f

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