

President, Socialist Republic of Vietnam
His Excellency Nguyễn Minh Triết
C/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hanoi
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

20 October 2009

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of English PEN, the founding centre of the international association of writers, to express our outrage at the sentences handed down to six dissident writers for 'spreading propaganda' against the government. We are also extremely concerned by the recent arrest of English PEN's Honorary Member **Tran Khai Thanh Thuy**.

According to our information, writer **Nguyen Xuan Nghia**, poet **Nguyen Van Tinh**, human rights defender **Nguyen Kim Nhan**, poet **Nguyen Van Tuc**, student and internet writer **Ngo Quynh**, and writer **Nguyen Manh Son** have all been charged with conducting anti-government propaganda under article 88 of Vietnam's penal code for their pro-democracy writings and activities, in particular their membership of the banned pro-democracy group Bloc 8406. Following a two-day trial in Hanoi that concluded on 9 October, the writers were handed down sentences ranging from two to six years.

Nguyen Xuan Nghia, Nguyen Van Tinh, Nguyen Kim Nhan, Nguyen Van Tuc, Ngo Quynh and Nguyen Manh Son are amongst dozens of activists to have been arrested since September 2008 as part of an alarming ongoing crackdown on peaceful dissent. We at English PEN firmly believe that they have been sentenced for their peaceful dissident writings and activities, and are therefore calling for their immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam is a signatory.

We are also deeply concerned by reports that our Honorary Member **Tran Khai Thanh Thuy** was beaten and arrested after she publicly expressed her support for these activists. According to our information, Tran Khai Thanh Thuy was detained on 8 October as she made her way to Hai Phong to support the activists as they faced trial. She was held incommunicado for several hours before being returned to her home and told that she could not leave. Later that evening, an incident took place at her home, the details of which are not yet clear. Tran Khai Thanh Thuy has subsequently been charged with assault, although it is widely believed that she was in fact the victim of an assault, and that the photograph used as evidence against her had been doctored. If convicted, Tran Khai Thanh Thuy could face up to three years in prison. As such, we are urgently seeking further details of her arrest, and urge the Vietnamese government to conduct an impartial investigation into the incident.

We would welcome your comments on our appeal.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Appignanesi
President, English PEN