



Viet Tan (Vietnam Reform Party)

*With members inside Vietnam and around the world,
Viet Tan aims to establish democracy and reform the country through peaceful means.*

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Freedom of Speech Outlawed in Vietnam

The Hanoi regime sentenced nine Vietnamese democracy activists to prison for publicly espousing democracy and asserting Vietnamese territorial claims in the Eastern Sea. After detaining the activists for over a year, authorities handed down pre-determined sentences in court proceedings lasting as short as two hours.

The kangaroo trials this week have demonstrated to the Vietnamese people and the international community that:

- Contrary to its denials, the Hanoi regime does in fact hold political prisoners. Convicting individuals for so-called “propaganda against the socialist state” criminalizes free speech and violates international covenants on human rights to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory.
- The Hanoi communist leadership places its monopoly power over national interests. It has effectively banned public discussion on Vietnamese territorial claims in order to placate political patrons in Beijing.
- Rule of law is absent in Vietnam. Clearly, there is no independent judiciary and these legal proceedings—from the political charges to the treatment of the defendants—violate the country’s own constitution and criminal procedure code.

The nine democracy activists convicted this week are: poet Tran Duc Thach, High school teacher Vu Hung, Engineer Pham Van Troi, Writer Nguyen Xuan Nghia, university student Ngo Quynh, former communist party member Nguyen Manh Son, essayist Nguyen Van Tinh, land rights activist Nguyen Van Tuc, and electrician Nguyen Kim Nhan. Collectively, they were sentenced to 32 years in prison and 27 years of probation.

These nine activists—along with cyber activist Pham Thanh Nghien who was also arrested in September 2008 but has yet to be formally charged—are innocent of all crimes. They are true Vietnamese patriots.

Viet Tan stands with these courageous voices and will continue working for the freedom of all political prisoners in Vietnam.

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