



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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November 8, 2010

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Vietnam's Orwellian legal code must be repealed

Instead of addressing the concerns of the people, the communist government of Vietnam uses the penal code—especially Article 88 (anti-state propaganda) and Article 79 (attempting to overthrow the regime)—to crackdown against voices advocating for the public interest.

Beginning in July, authorities arrested four members of Viet Tan—university professor Pham Minh Hoang, Mennonite pastor Duong Kim Khai, Ms. Tran Thi Thuy and Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam—for violating Article 79 in response to their pro-democracy advocacy. Authorities have yet to provide any information on the place of detention or well-being of pastor Khai, Ms. Thuy or Mr. Tam despite repeated requests from their families.

Subsequently, authorities sentenced three labor activists—Mr. Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, Ms. Do Thi Minh Hanh and Mr. Doan Huy Chuong—to long prison sentences for helping workers organize for higher wages. Authorities also convicted six Catholic villagers for causing a public disturbance as they were protesting the confiscation of parish land.

At the same time, authorities renewed a campaign to silence bloggers including Phan Thanh Hai (Saigon Brother Three), Le Nguyen Huong Tra (Do Long Girl) and Nguyen Van Hai (Dieu Cay). Blogger Dieu Cay was not released at the end of his two year six month prison sentence but detained further under the new charge of violating Article 88.

Security police continued to intimidate and harass respected academic Vi Duc Hoi, detaining him under Article 88. Meanwhile, police have continued to interrogate and threaten attorney Le Thi Cong Nhan for her recent writings.

Perhaps most outrageous was the detention of legal scholar Cu Huy Ha Vu on the evening of November 4. Through state media, police insinuated that he was arrested for having an “improper relationship” with a woman though he was later charged with violating Article 88. This is pure retribution by the Communist Party's Politburo for Mr. Vu's legal defense of victims of social injustice and his lawsuit against prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung.

The wave of arrests under various legal pretexts shows a communist leadership worried by opposition within the party and society at large. Vietnamese are increasingly joining public calls to stop bauxite mining in the Central Highlands. Many others are unafraid to question Prime Minister's Dung responsibility in the bankruptcy of state-owned Vinashin.

Viet Tan encourages human rights defenders to challenge the Vietnamese Communist Party's “rule by law” and to pressure for the repeal of statutes such as Article 88 and Article 79 which restrict freedom of speech and the right to participate in peaceful political activities.

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