



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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May 20, 2011

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Hanoi regime puts Viet Tan members and social justice activists on trial

In one of the largest political trials in Vietnam to date, communist authorities will try seven land rights and religious freedom advocates on May 30, 2011 at the People's Court of Ben Tre Province. The defendants are:

1. Pastor Duong Kim Khai, 52 years old
2. Ms. Tran Thi Thuy, 40 years old
3. Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam, 58 years old
4. Mr. Pham Van Thong, 49 years old
5. Mr. Nguyen Chi Thanh, 38 years old
6. Ms. Pham Ngoc Hoa
7. Mr. Cao Van Tinh, 37 years old

All seven are charged with "attempting to overthrow the socialist government" under Article 79 of the Vietnamese penal code based on affiliation with Viet Tan. Arrested and held incommunicado since summer 2010, they have not been granted access to family and defense lawyers despite repeated requests.

Viet Tan considers all seven activists to be Vietnamese patriots, faithful to their religious ideals, and selflessly serving their communities.

They are aggrieved citizens who have petitioned for many years for legal redress, both for themselves and others victimized by government corruption. Inspired by their faith as members of the Cattle Shed Congregation, a Mennonite house church, these activists engaged in peaceful advocacy for social justice.

As we stated following their arrest in July and August 2010, Pastor Duong Kim Khai, Ms. Tran Thi Thuy and Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam are members of Viet Tan, advocating for a democratic Vietnam. Engaging in political activities and exercising freedom of association are fundamental rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The subversion charges under Article 79 are not only illogical but represent a travesty of justice. Communist authorities in Vietnam are using the legal code to rationalize human rights abuses and the silencing of peaceful opposition.

Viet Tan will shortly submit a petition to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of the seven social justice advocates. We urgently call on all human rights defenders to support the campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of these seven prisoners of conscience.

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