



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.*

www.viettan.org • [@viettan](https://twitter.com/viettan) • www.facebook.com/vt4democracy

May 30, 2011

Contact:
Duy Hoang
+1.202.470.0845

Fearing nonviolent civic action, communist Vietnam convicts Ben Tre activists

Viet Tan strongly condemns today's travesty of justice in Ben Tre, Vietnam. The pre-determined sentencing of seven land rights and democracy activists in a closed-door trial is further evidence of why the Hanoi regime lacks popular legitimacy and is routinely condemned for its human rights violations by the international community.

In a day long trial, the so-called People's Court of Ben Tre handed down the following convictions for "attempting to overthrow the people's administration":

- Ms. Tran Thi Thuy, 8 years imprisonment and 5 years probation
- Mr. Pham Van Thong, 7 years imprisonment and 5 years probation
- Pastor Duong Kim Khai, 6 years imprisonment and 5 years probation
- Mr. Cao Van Tinh, 5 years imprisonment and 4 years probation
- Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam, 2 years imprisonment and 3 years probation
- Mr. Nguyen Chi Thanh, 2 years imprisonment and 3 years probation
- Ms. Pham Ngoc Hoa, 2 years imprisonment and 3 years probation

With these unjust sentences, the Hanoi regime has attempted to silence seven activists who spoke out against the regime's failings. Authorities also mobilized security police to prevent other aggrieved citizens and some relatives of the defendants from attending the trial or gathering outside the court.

In recent years, countless Vietnamese activists have been arbitrarily detained and convicted in proceedings that violated both international norms and local law. Like attorney Cu Huy Ha Vu, blogger Dieu Cay, writer Nguyen Xuan Nghia, writer Tran Khai Thanh Thuy, and former communist party member Vi Duc Hoi before, the seven Ben Tre activists were persecuted for promoting a vision of a free and democratic Vietnam.

Viet Tan affirms that engaging in peaceful political activities, including joining political parties, is no crime. These are fundamental rights enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a signatory.

The seven Ben Tre activists engaged in activities that are within their rights, such as:

- Attending courses on nonviolent struggle.
- Drawing and distributing slogans affirming Vietnamese sovereignty over the Paracel (Hoang Sa) and Spratly (Truong Sa) islands.
- Assisting victims of government corruption to petition for redress and organize as a collective voice.

Viet Tan challenges the Hanoi government to substantiate its charges against the Ben Tre 7 before UN human rights bodies and international public opinion.

More than ever, Viet Tan will continue to promote understanding of nonviolent civic action and partner with Vietnamese compatriots from all walks of life to bring about democratic change through nonviolent means.

###