



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

---

June 9, 2011

Contact:  
Duy Hoang  
+1.202.470.0845

## **Viet Tan challenges communist Vietnam's arbitrary detention of seven democracy and land rights activists**

In a petition filed today to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Viet Tan urged the UN human rights body to call for the release of democracy and land rights activists arbitrarily detained in Vietnam.

The petition was submitted on behalf of seven peaceful activists convicted under Article 79 of the Vietnamese Penal Code, "attempting to overthrow the government," in a closed, one-day trial on May 30, 2011 by the so-called People's Court of Ben Tre. They are: Ms. Tran Thi Thuy, Mr. Pham Van Thong, Pastor Duong Kim Khai, Mr. Cao Van Tinh, Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tam, Mr. Nguyen Chi Thanh, and Ms. Pham Ngoc Hoa.

The petition offers five reasons why the Hanoi government's detention and conviction of the activists constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of liberty:

1. Through the use of Article 79 of the Vietnamese Penal Code, the Hanoi government violated the activists' internationally-recognized right to freedom of association under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. Article of 79 is exceptionally vague and does not distinguish between violent acts that endanger national security and peaceful political advocacy. It is therefore subject to manipulation for political reasons.
3. The non-violent activities conducted by the activists, as contained in the indictment by the People's Procuracy of Ben Tre Province, presented no threat to the national security of Vietnam and therefore fall under those actions protected by international law.
4. The Hanoi government denied the activists an open and fair trial in violation of international and Vietnamese laws.
5. Prior to the trial, the Hanoi government denied the activists access to legal counsel and opportunity to prepare and present a defense in violation of international and Vietnamese laws. Following the trial, the government continued to block family and defense lawyers from meeting with the activists to discuss how to appeal the unfair sentence.

Today's submission highlights the need to compel the Hanoi government to respect internationally recognized human rights. The full petition to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is available at [www.viettan.org/unwgad](http://www.viettan.org/unwgad).

Through nonviolent civic actions within Vietnam and through various international forums, Viet Tan will continue to challenge Hanoi's abuse of the legal system to limit the right of Vietnamese to participate in national affairs.

###