



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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Vietnamese government releases Le Van Phan and Nguyen Thi Thinh

On November 23, 2007, Vietnamese security police arrested Le Van Phan and Nguyen Thi Thinh at the airport in Saigon and subsequently accused the couple of terrorism for allegedly smuggling a handgun and thirteen bullets into Vietnam at the request of a Viet Tan member in the United States. After 19 days of detention, on December 11, 2007, the two American citizens were released by authorities. According to the US Embassy, Nguyen Thi Thinh fully disavowed the accusations of Vietnamese police.

With regards to this case, Viet Tan declares:

- The treatment by the authorities of Le Van Phan and Nguyen Thi Thinh—two innocent individuals, with no connection to Viet Tan—was a lowly act unworthy of a nation's government.
- The fact that the authorities brandied charges of terrorism and smuggling of weapons—which are serious allegations—and then shortly later released the defendants demonstrates the arbitrariness and disregard for international norms by the Vietnamese government. This incident also invalidates efforts by the regime to tar Viet Tan as terrorists.
- The release of Le Van Thinh and Nguyen Thi Phan after a botched attempt to frame them, along with the release of Viet Tan members Leon Truong and Nguyen Thi Thanh Van, was not the result of a pardon, but because authorities lacked any plausible legal justification to charge the above individuals. These releases are also a sign that the regime is paralyzed on how to handle the nonviolent struggle for democracy pursued by Viet Tan.
- The fact that the authorities trampled on these individuals' freedom, engaged in psychological and physical abuse, is an act of terror. This is also considered a crime of terror under Article 84 of the Vietnamese Penal Code.
- The fact that the authorities knowingly publicized fabricated information, defaming Vietnamese and foreign citizens, is an act of slander and libel. This is also considered a crime of slander under Article 122 of the Vietnamese Penal Code.

Viet Tan welcomes the release of Le Van Phan and Nguyen Thi Thinh. However, the release of this couple and the two Viet Tan democracy activists does not erase the illegal actions of the authorities. The Vietnamese regime must answer to international opinion on the firearm it allegedly found in the luggage of the Vietnamese American couple and answer for its accusations regarding the supposed failure of America's Transportation Security Agency (TSA).

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