



VIET NAM RELEASE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International is calling for all prisoners of conscience to be included in a major amnesty for prisoners, authorized by Viet Nam's President to mark National Day on 2 September 2010. The Ministry of Public Security has said that between 25,000 to 30,000 prisoners will be granted amnesty and released from prison before National Day.

Prisoner amnesties take place two or three times a year in Viet Nam, usually on the occasion of Lunar New Year (dates vary), Liberation Day (30 April) and National Day. Prisoners considered to be a threat to national security are normally excluded. As most prisoners of conscience have been sentenced under provisions of the national security section of the Penal Code, it appears unlikely that they will be considered for release. However, prisoners of conscience have been included under earlier amnesties. In 1998, at least 13 prisoners of conscience were released under two amnesties for more than 7,500 prisoners, and others have been released since then.

Dozens of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam have been convicted and sentenced after unfair trials in recent years. Most have been charged under Article 88 (Conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) or Article 79 (Carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration) of the 1999 Penal Code. The reasons behind their imprisonment include activities such as supporting political groups not recognized by the state; criticizing government policies; calling for democracy and human rights; taking part in peaceful public protests; posting pieces which are critical of the government on the internet; giving interviews to foreign journalists; publishing dissident journals; and providing legal advice for other dissidents on trial.



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They include independent trade unionists **Tran Quoc Hien** and **Doan Van Dien**; human rights lawyer **Nguyen Van Dai** (photo left); and **Truong Quoc Huy** mobile phone technician. Catholic priest **Father Nguyen Van Ly**, who is serving an eight year sentence, was temporarily released on 15 March 2010 for 12 months so that he could obtain medical treatment following a stroke he had in prison in November 2009. He remains under surveillance and restriction, and is at risk of return to prison at any time. **Nguyen Binh Thanh** and **Nguyen Phong**, tried in the same case, are serving five and six year prison sentences respectively. Buddhist monk **Thich Quang Do**, the head of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV), has been under indefinite house arrest at the Thanh Minh Zen monastery in Ho Chi Minh City since 2003. Human rights lawyer **Le Thi Cong Nhan**, is currently detained under three years' house arrest, after completing a three year prison sentence in March 2010.

Amnesty International is calling on the Vietnamese authorities to take this opportunity to release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally for the National Day amnesty of 2010. At the same time, the authorities should make a commitment to repeal or amend vaguely worded legislation which criminalizes peaceful dissent, and to end the harassment and imprisonment of individuals for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and opinion.

Partial list of prisoners of conscience

Note: Unless otherwise stated, the organizations named below are banned

1. **Doan Van Dien:** Leading member of the United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO). Arrested in November 2006 and sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment;
2. **Le Cong Dinh:** Human rights lawyer and member of the Democratic Party of Viet Nam (DPV), arrested in June 2009 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, plus three years' house arrest on release;
3. **Le Nguyen Sang:** Medical doctor and member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), arrested in August 2006 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, plus two years' house arrest on release;
4. **Le Thang Long:** IT company director, arrested in June 2009, and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment, plus three years' house arrest on release;
5. **Le Thi Cong Nhan:** Human rights lawyer and member of the Committee for Human Rights in Viet Nam, arrested in March 2007 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Now serving three years under provisions of house arrest.
6. **Ngo Quynh:** A university student and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in September 2008, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, with two years' house arrest on release;
7. **Nguyen Binh Thanh:** Electrician and member of the Viet Nam Progression Party (VNPP), arrested in February 2007, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment with two years' house arrest on release;
8. **Nguyen Hoang Hai also known as Dieu Cay:** Blogger and co-founder of the Vietnamese Journalists Club, arrested in April 2008 and sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment;
9. **Nguyen Kim Nhan:** Electrician and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, with two years' house arrest on release;
10. **Nguyen Manh Son:** An engineer and former member of the official Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV), arrested in 2008 and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment, with two or three years' house arrest on release;
11. **Nguyen Phong:** Chairman of the VNPP, arrested in February 2007 and sentenced to six years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest on release;
12. **Nguyen Tien Trung:** IT engineer, blogger and member of Viet Youth for Democracy, arrested in July 2009 and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment with three years' house arrest on release;
13. **Nguyen Van Dai:** Human rights lawyer, founder of the Committee for Human Rights in Viet Nam and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in March 2007 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, plus four years' house arrest on release;
14. **Father Nguyen Van Ly:** Catholic priest, co-founder of Bloc 8406 and the VNPP, arrested in February 2007 and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment plus five years' house arrest on release. Sentence suspended for 12 months in March 2010 on medical grounds;
15. **Nguyen Van Ngoc:** Member of the Vietnamese Political and Religious Prisoners Friendship Association (VPRPFA), arrested in June 2007 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment;
16. **Nguyen Van Tinh:** Writer and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment, plus two or three years' house arrest on release;
17. **Nguyen Van Tuc:** supporter of Bloc 8406, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest on release;
18. **Nguyen Xuan Nghia:** Writer and supporter of Bloc 8406, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to six years' imprisonment and two to three years' house arrest on release;
19. **Pham Ba Hai:** Businessman and supporter of Bloc 8406, arrested in September 2006 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment with two years' house arrest on release;
20. **Pham Than Nghien (f):** Writer and supporter of Bloc 8406, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment with three to five years' house arrest on release;
21. **Pham Van Troi:** Poet and supporter of Bloc 8406, arrested in September 2008, and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and four years' house arrest on release;
22. **Thich Quang Do,** Buddhist monk and Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam, since October 2003 held in indefinite administrative detention under house arrest;
23. **Tran Anh Kim:** Former army officer and writer, Deputy Secretary General of the DPV, arrested in July 2009 and sentenced to five and a half years' imprisonment, with three years' house arrest on release;
24. **Tran Duc Thach:** Poet and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in September 2008 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, with three years' house arrest on release;
25. **Tran Huynh Duy Thuc:** IT company owner and DPV member, arrested in May 2009 and sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment, with five years' house arrest on release;
26. **Tran Khai Thanh Thuy (f):** Novelist, journalist and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested in October 2009 and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment;
27. **Tran Quoc Hien:** Writer, legal adviser, and spokesperson for the UWFO, arrested in January 2007 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, with two years' house arrest on release;
28. **Truong Minh Duc:** Freelance journalist, Bloc 8406 supporter and member of Viet Nam Populist Party, arrested May 2007 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment with three years' house arrest on release;
29. **Truong Quoc Huy:** Mobile phone engineer and Bloc 8406 supporter, arrested August 2006 and sentenced to six years' imprisonment, with three years' house arrest on release;
30. **Vu Hung:** Bloc 8406 supporter and former physics teacher, arrested September 2008, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest on release.

TAKE ACTION!

Write to the State President and the Chairman of the Amnesty Advisory Council:

Nguyen Minh Triet

President

Office of the President

35 Ngo Quyen

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Email: banbientap@mofa.gov.vn (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear President

Truong Vinh Trong

Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Amnesty Advisory Council

Prime Minister's Office

Hoang Hoa Tham

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Email: Link to automated contact to the Prime Minister's office:

http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page?_pageid=439,4248311&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

- Call on the authorities to use the opportunity of the large-scale prisoner amnesty authorized by the State President for 2 September, National Day, to release all prisoners of conscience;
- Call on the authorities to end the harassment, arrest and imprisonment of peaceful dissidents;
- Call on the authorities to repeal or amend provisions in the 1999 Penal Code that criminalize peaceful dissent and ensure that legislation fully protects the rights to freedom of expression, association and opinion.