

URGENT ACTION

CATHOLIC PRIEST RISKS BEING RETURNED TO PRISON

Vietnamese human rights activist and Catholic priest Father Nguyen Van Ly is at risk of being returned to prison in mid-March despite his fragile health. He suffered from a stroke in prison in November 2009 which left him partially paralyzed, after being held in solitary confinement. He did not receive adequate medical treatment.

Father Ly, now aged 64, was granted a 12 month "temporary suspension" of his eight year prison sentence on 15 March 2010 so that he could receive medical treatment after also being diagnosed with a brain tumour. Since his release, he has been living under surveillance at a house for retired priests in the diocese of the Archbishop of Hue, in central Viet Nam.

Whilst in prison, Father Ly was held mainly in solitary confinement, and suffered from several periods of ill-health over a seven month period before having a stroke. He received neither a proper diagnosis nor adequate medical care. The authorities sent him to Prison Hospital 198 in mid-November 2009, but returned him to prison on 11 December while he was still partially paralyzed.

Father Ly was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in 2007 for spreading "propaganda" against the state. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, arrested and convicted for the peaceful dissemination of his views on democracy and human rights.

Father Ly was first jailed for his criticism of government policies on religion in the late 1970s, and has already spent 17 years as a prisoner of conscience, for calling for respect for human rights and freedom of expression. He is one of the founders of the internet-based pro-democracy movement Bloc 8406, and has helped to set up other political groups, which are banned by the Vietnamese authorities. He also secretly published a dissident journal, *To Do Ngon Luan* (Freedom and Democracy).

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Father Ly immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his non-violent beliefs.
- Requesting that Father Ly is not returned to prison when the 12 months suspension of his sentence expires in March 2011.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 MARCH 2011 TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Pham Gia Khiem
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Fax: + 8443 823 1872
Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Public Security
Le Hong Anh
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Fax: 8443 942 0223
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Apostolic Nuncio to Viet Nam
(Diplomatic Vatican representative to
Viet Nam)
Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli
55 Waterloo Street 6,
Singapore 0718

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA313/09. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA41/011/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Father Nguyen Van Ly is one of more than 30 dissidents imprisoned in Viet Nam, as part of the authorities' aim to suppress any criticism of government policies and allegations about human rights violations. The authorities use vaguely-worded articles of the Penal Code to stifle and criminalize freedom of expression, in breach of international treaties that Viet Nam has ratified. At least 22 pro-democracy and human rights activists have been convicted and sentenced to long prison terms since October 2009.

In 2009 Viet Nam rejected important recommendations made by states under the UN Universal Periodic Review process, including recommendations to amend or repeal national security provisions of the Penal Code inconsistent with international law; to remove other restrictions on dissent, debate, political opposition, and freedom of expression and peaceful assembly; and to release prisoners of conscience.

Further information on UA: 313/09 Index: ASA 41/001/2011 Issue Date: 09 February 2011

