



JOINT STATEMENT CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF VIETNAMESE PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE, TRAN HUYNH DUY THUC

24th May 2015

On 24 May 2009, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, Vietnamese ICT entrepreneur and blogger, was arrested under the initial charge of “promoting anti-government propaganda” under Article 88 of the Vietnamese Penal Code for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. On 20 January 2010, in a one-day trial, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc and his three co-defendants – Le Cong Dinh, Nguyen Tien Trung and Le Thang Long – were prosecuted at the People’s Court of Ho Chi Minh City for “conducting activities aimed at overthrowing the people’s administration” under Article 79 of the Penal Code. Thuc was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment followed by 5 years of house arrest, while Dinh, Trung and Long, were sentenced to 5 years, 7 years and 5 years’ imprisonment followed by 3 years of house arrest, respectively.

Contrary to being found guilty of aiming to “overthrow” the state, the activities for which Thuc and his co-defendants were prosecuted comprised only blogging that called for political reform and respect for human rights (e.g. https://tranfami.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/hewing_quest_for_democracy_and_prosperity/) They did not receive a fair trial and relatives of the defendants and foreign journalists were not allowed in the courtroom. The defendants’ microphones did not function when Thuc’s defense counsel tried to speak on his behalf or when Long attempted to inform the court that the defendants’ confessions were written under duress. According to eyewitnesses, the judges deliberated for only 15 minutes before returning with the judgment, which took 45 minutes to read, suggesting it had been prepared in advance of the hearing.

On 29 August 2012, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (**WGAD**) adopted the opinion that Thuc and his three co-defendants’ detention violated the right to freedom of opinion and expression guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (**ICCPR**), as well as the right to liberty and security of person (Article 9) and the right to freedom of association (Article 21). Vietnam is a party to the ICCPR. Consequently, the WGAD requested the

Vietnamese government to release them and provide them with compensation, in accordance with its international obligations. Although Vietnam accepted 31 of the recommendations calling for the respect and protection of freedom of expression at the Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in 2014, the Vietnamese government has still failed to resolve Thuc's case.

Today, 24 May 2015, marks Thuc's 6th year of imprisonment. Until now, Thuc remains in prison while his three co-defendants have been released early. As such, we would like to call on the Vietnamese government to abide by their international and domestic obligations by ensuring that Thuc is immediately released. Only when the relevant authorities have taken the necessary steps so that his conviction is overturned, will justice to Thuc be restored. The international community and human rights organizations will be watching.

SIGNED:

1. Amnesty International – ENGLAND
2. Civil Rights Defenders – SWEDEN
3. Freedom House – USA
4. International Commission of Jurists – SWITZERLAND
5. California State Senator Janet Nguyen, Thirty-Fourth District - USA
6. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) – THAILAND
7. Asian Human Rights Commission – HONG KONG
8. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners – BURMA
9. Burma Partnership – BURMA
10. Centre for Human Rights Education – PAKISTAN
11. Citizens for Justice and Peace – INDIA
12. Imparsial – INDONESIA
13. Justice and Peace Netherlands, The Hague – NETHERLANDS
14. Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders – HONG KONG
15. OT Watch Mongolia – MONGOLIA
16. Taiwan Association for Human Rights – TAIWAN
17. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS) – INDONESIA
18. Triangle Women's Support Group – BURMA
19. Van Lang – CZECH REPUBLIC
20. Vietnamese Overseas Initiative for Conscience Empowerment – PHILIPPINES
21. Association for the Protection of Religious Freedom – VIETNAM
22. Association of Former Political and Religious Prisoners of Vietnam – VIETNAM
23. Bach Dang Giang Foundation – VIETNAM
24. Bau Bi Tuong Than Association – VIETNAM
25. Canadian Youth for Human Rights Vietnam – VIETNAM
26. Civil Society Forum – VIETNAM
27. Chuong Bo Evangelical Protestant Church – VIETNAM
28. Evangelical Lutheran Church American and Vietnam – VIETNAM
29. Former Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience - VIETNAM
30. Independent Journalist Association – VIETNAM
31. No – U Mien Trung - VIETNAM
32. REM Defenders – VIETNAM
33. Vietnam Path Movement – VIETNAM
34. Vietnamese Bloggers Network – VIETNAM
35. Vietnamese United Buddhist Sangha – VIETNAM
36. Group of Nguyen Kim Dien Priest – VIETNAM