

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/vietnam-rwb-can-prove-innocence-of-11-01-2013,43896.html>

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Asia - Vietnam

Unwarranted verdict

## RWB can prove innocence of convicted blogger Paulus Le Son

11 January 2013

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Reporters Without Borders is appalled at the groundless verdict handed down yesterday by a court in northern city of Vinh against eight bloggers and cyber dissidents. They were among a total of 14 Catholic activists sentenced to between three and 13 years' imprisonment.

The press freedom organization is in a position to prove the innocence of the blogger **Paulus Le Son**, accused of participating in the activities of the Viet Tan opposition party in Bangkok in 2011.

"We have proof that the Vietnamese authorities use false pretexts to convict bloggers that criticize them," it said in a statement.

"Paulus Le Son did not attend a Viet Tan event between 25 and 30 July 2011 for the simple reason that he was attending a training course organized by Reporters Without Borders in Bangkok. The course, aimed at bloggers from various countries in South East Asia, was on the management and e-reputation of social networks.

"This verdict serves only to illustrate the paranoia of the authorities who not only monitor citizens' every movement, but are also fed incorrect information by the intelligence service.

"The seven other bloggers were convicted on similarly fallacious grounds. None of them has worked to overthrow the government. In reality, they are paying the price of the relentless victimisation conducted by the government to silence dissident voices, which mostly affects bloggers, in particular Catholic networks."

The organization continued: "We strongly dispute the convictions of Paulus Le Son and the seven other bloggers and call for their immediate release."



*Paulus Le Son participating to a training organized by Reporters Without Borders, Bangkok, July 2011.*

The verdict was announced by Judge Tran Ngoc Son after a two-day trial. The 14 activists – of the original 17, three were convicted in May last year of anti-state propaganda – were accused by prosecutors of maintaining ties with Viet Tan, a US-based exile group regarded as a terrorist organization by the Vietnamese government.

Three were charged under Clause 1 of Article 79 of the criminal code with organizing an attempt to overthrow the government, for which penalties range from 12 years in prison to the death penalty. The 11 others were charged under Clause 2 of Section 79 with participating in an attempt to overthrow the government, for which the penalties range from eight to 15 years in prison. [Paulus Le Son](#) (real name Le Van Son) was among the three charged under Clause 1 of Article 79. According to the [indictment](#), he was the only one not to have acknowledged his mistakes.

The prosecutor's office, which published some of the charges, called for a sentence of between 15 and 16 years' imprisonment for him and between 12 and 13 years for **Dang Xuan Dieu** and **Ho Duc Hoa**, the two other bloggers facing the same charges. In the end, all three were sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment, followed by five years of house arrest.

The five other bloggers (**Nguyen Van Oai, Nguyen Van Duyet, Nong Hung Anh, Thai Van Dung, Tran Minh Nhat**) received prison sentences of between three and eight years, followed by house arrest of two to five years. Another accused blogger, **Nguyen Dang Vinh Phuc**, received a suspended sentence.

An atmosphere of considerable tension surrounded the trial. Several members of the families of the accused who attended the start of the trial were forced to leave after they shouted that their loved ones were innocent. Outside the court, several hundred police officers kept friends of the accused away from the building.

Police stopped the cars bringing the bloggers to court at the edge of the city and the accused were forced to walk to the courtroom. Scuffles broke out and witnesses said several women, including Nguyen Thi Hoa, the mother of defendant Nguyen Dinh Cuong, were beaten by the police. Madame Hoa lost consciousness and was taken to hospital. About 3 p.m., the bloggers **Nguoi Buon Gio** (real name Bui Thanh Hieu), **Nguyen Lan Thang** and **Truong Van Dung**, who arrived to report on the trial, were taken to the police headquarters for questioning. Bui Thanh

Hieu was held in custody for three days. Such arrests of bloggers during trials are increasingly common.

The trial was [the second in Vietnam in less than two weeks at which netizens were convicted.](#)

Vietnam is included on the list of "[Internet Enemies](#)" compiled by Reporters Without Borders. It is also [the world's third biggest prison for bloggers and cyber dissidents, after China and Iran.](#)

*Photo of the logo : TuoiTreOnline*

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