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Asia - Vietnam

Warped justice

Prominent blogger sentenced to three years in prison

29 August 2014

She and two other activists, who also got jail terms, were arrested in February

The Vietnamese authorities displayed their warped sense of justice again on 26 August when a people's court in the southern province of Dong Thap sentenced blogger and pro-democracy activist **Bui Thi Minh Hang** to three years in prison at the end of a summary trial that violated defence rights.

Two other activists who were tried with her, **Nguyen Van Minh** and **Thi Thuy Quynh**, were given jail terms of 30 and 24 months respectively. All three were convicted of "causing public disorder" under paragraphs (a) and (b) of article 245 of the penal code.

The authorities deployed major security measures at the trial and prevented more than 200 people, including friends and relatives, from attending. Around 40 bloggers who went to the courthouse to support the defendants were roughed up and arrested by police, who confiscated mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices.

Four defence witnesses were also prevented from attending the trial, in which the prosecution used rigged evidence. Bloggers who were present at Hang's arrest said they were pressured by police to make written statements identifying her as the instigator of the alleged "public disorder."

"This latest jail sentence, imposed in complete violation of defence rights, is further evidence of the Vietnamese authorities' contempt for freedom of information and for those who try to use this freedom," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific Desk.

"We call for the immediate release of Hang and all the other bloggers who are being held for political reasons."

Hang has staged four hunger strikes since [her arrest on 11 February](#), when police detained her and around 20 other activists as they were on their way to visit the family of the jailed human rights lawyer Nguyen Bac Truyen. Most of them were released after about 12 hours.

The first time Hang's daughter was allowed to see her since her arrest was on 18 August.

Vietnam is ranked 174th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).
