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Asia - Vietnam

Diplomat assaulted

RWB condemns harassment of Vietnamese blogger and family

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Reporters Without Borders deplores the harassment of the blogger Pham Minh Hoang and his family, which led to an assault on the French consul-general in Ho Chi Minh City on November 5.

The diplomat, Emmanuel Ly Batallan, was assaulted by gangsters supported by plain-clothes police when he tried to assist **Pham Minh Hoang**, a Franco-Vietnamese blogger, and his mother in Ho Chi Minh City.

Five days ago, a group of thugs accompanied by plain-clothes officers moved into a house close to Hoang's home and that of his mother, in which the cyber dissident **Nguyen Bac Truyen** also lives.

The gangsters have been putting pressure on both men and Hoang's mother.

At the request of the blogger, the French consul went to see the gangsters to ask them to end their intimidation. As soon as he entered the building, he was grabbed from both sides and assaulted.

"Such violence is unacceptable, especially when police are involved," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"Pham Minh Hoang and Nguyen Bac Truyen have served their prison sentences, although they were invalid and entirely disproportionate. The endless harassment, intimidation and stabbing threats, to which the bloggers and their families have been subjected, must end immediately."

Just before the assault, Hoang's wife, Le Thi Kieu Oanh, a French national, asked the thugs to leave the premises only to be threatened herself by a knife-wielding man. The continual harassment of Hoang's family has taken its toll on the health of his mother, who was admitted to hospital suffering from high blood pressure.

The Vietnamese Foreign Ministry was reported to have been informed of the assault and to have advised the consul to protest through diplomatic channels.

Hoang was sentenced to [three years' imprisonment](#) in 2011, followed by a further three years' house arrest, for "attempting to overthrow the government." He remains under house arrest.

Truyen received a [four-year prison term](#) in 2007 for anti-state propaganda.

Huang, a politically committed blogger known by the pen-name Phan Kien Quoc, has published numerous articles on education, the environment and Vietnam's sovereignty disputes with China which have been widely circulated online.

He participated in a campaign against Chinese mining of bauxite in Vietnam's central highlands and his name was at the bottom of a petition on this issue, which attracted a lot of support in Vietnam. He is a member of the pro-democracy party Viet Tan, which has been banned by the one-party communist government.

Vietnam is ranked 174th of 180 countries in the [2014 World Press Freedom Index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders.
