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<http://www.rsf.org/vietnam-call-for-support-for-vietnamese-19-11-2011,41422.html>

Asia - Vietnam

Mobilisation

Call for support for Vietnamese blogger behind bars for more than two years

19 November 2011

Reporters Without Borders expresses its gravest concern over the fate of the Vietnamese blogger and democratic activist Nguyen Tien Trung, in custody for more than two years and [sentenced](#) in January last year to seven years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest for subversion.

"We request the immediate and unconditional release of de Nguyen Tien Trung. The accusations made against him are a total fabrication," the press freedom organization said.

"Nguyen Tien Trung has never been a danger to the Vietnamese state. He merely expressed himself freely, a right guaranteed by the constitution. The authorities want to make an example of him and intimidate Vietnamese students who return home from studies abroad and demand greater freedom."

Trung, a graduate of the INSA School of Engineering in the French city of Rennes, was [arrested](#) at his parents' home in Ho Chi Minh City on 7 July 2009 for "anti-state propaganda" under the criminal code.

A government TV station broadcast his taped confession. Under duress, he admitted in court he had broken the law and had been influenced by Western values. However, he said he had no intention of overthrowing the government, a statement which was believed to have been taken into account by the judge.

He was found guilty on 20 January last year of endangering national security and colluding via the Internet with reactionary organizations based abroad to organise campaigns aimed at overthrowing the people's government.

His family announced it would campaign for his release. They stressed that Trung never had any intention of overthrowing the government and was simply exercising his rights as a citizen.

The [committee](#) formed to support him published on its website a tribute from his former professor at INSA, Philippe Echard, who said: "It's a strange thing as an educator to imagine that a student one has taught, with whom one has had discussions, and to whom one has most probably paid particular attention since he is a foreigner, is today in prison in his own country at the other end of the world and facing serious charges..."

"Why is he in prison? For expressing himself freely, for criticising university education in Vietnam, for appealing, like many other intellectuals in his country, for greater freedom and democracy."

The committee has called for a campaign for his release: "The worst that can happen to Trung is that he is forgotten little by little," it said. His family and friends have stepped up their action – visit <http://freetrung.tk> and sign their petition.

International Solidarity Week is a major event in France to raise awareness of international solidarity and sustainable development. A number of events have been organised throughout the country and the Committee for the Release of Nguyen Tien Trung, headed by Professor

Echard, was due to give a presentation on Friday 19 in Rennes on cyber dissidence in Vietnam, giving full details of Trung's case.

The committee has organised a mass meeting on Saturday 19 a 2 p.m. in the Place de la Mairie in Rennes, which will be attended by teachers and students from INSA and by many of those who support Trung. On this occasion, Reporters Without Borders joins the committee in demanding his release.

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Statement by Jean-François Julliard, secretary-general of Reporters Without Borders, on the occasion of the presentation by the Committee for the Release of Nguyen Tien Trung in Rennes on 18 November.

More than two years after his conviction, we wish to reaffirm our support for Nguyen Tien Trung and his family on the occasion of International Solidarity Week. We are pursuing our efforts to obtain his release and we continue to defend the right to freedom of information in Vietnam.

On 2 September, Vietnam's national day, we sent a [letter](#) to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. At that time, the government had announced an [amnesty](#) for more than 10,000 detainees. We requested that all prisoners of conscience also be released and drew the prime minister's attention to the fate of the three journalists and 17 bloggers, including Nguyen Tien Trung, who were still in prison. To date, there has been no reply to the letter.

Human rights and freedom of expression have deteriorated in the country in recent years and arrests go on. Today, Vietnam is the country with the second highest number of netizens in prison, after China. Most have been charged with subversion or trying to overthrow the people's government under article 88 of the criminal code.

However, in several of its provisions the Vietnamese constitution guarantees human rights and freedom of expression. Article 43, for example, gives citizens the right to take part in public and social affairs and discuss local and national problems, to send petitions or make recommendations to the organs of state, and to participate in referendums organised by the government .

What, then, justifies Nguyen Tien Trung's detention for addressing the government on the country's education policy and expressing pro-democratic views?

Article 69 guarantees freedom of expression and of the press. Citizens have the right to be informed, as well as to hold meetings, form associations and take part in demonstrations within the law. Why has he been criticized for affiliation to the Democratic Party of Vietnam?

Finally, article 71 protects citizens' physical integrity, private life, health, honour and dignity. No one can be arrested without a warrant issued by the People's Court or ratified by the People's Inspectorate, except in cases where someone is caught breaking the law red-handed. Nguyen Tien Trung merely expressed his desire to see these principles applied and respected. Yet he has been accused of "anti-state propaganda".

Just after the 66th anniversary of Vietnam's independence in September this year, we welcomed the release of 10,000 detainees. Today we urgently call on the Vietnamese authorities to extend the amnesty to Nguyen Tien Trung and all political prisoners.

Jean-François Julliard Secretary-General, Reporters Without Borders
