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<http://www.rsf.org/vietnam-eight-bloggers-get-sentences-12-10-2009,34653.html>

Asia - Vietnam

Amnesty

Blogger and poet freed under amnesty, but 17 bloggers and three journalists still held

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Reporters Without Borders hails the release of the blogger **Nguyen Van Tinh** and the poet **Tran Duc Thach** under an amnesty for more than 10,000 detainees that the government has announced for the 66th anniversary of Vietnam's independence on 2 September.

Tinh and Thach were convicted in 2009 of "propaganda against the socialist state." Tinh was sentenced to three and a half years in prison. Thach got a three-year sentence.

Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities to free all the prisoners of conscience in Vietnam, especially Pham Mihn Hoang, a blogger with French and Vietnamese dual nationality who was sentenced to three years in prison on 10 August after a year in pre-trial detention (<http://en.rsf.org/vietnam-french-vi...>). A total of 17 bloggers and three journalists are still detained.

Eight bloggers get sentences ranging from two to six years in jail 12.10.2009

Reporters Without Borders is appalled by the jail sentences that eight Vietnamese bloggers received last week on charges of anti-government propaganda under article 88 of the criminal code. **Vu Hung** was sentenced to three years in prison in Hanoi on 7 October. **Pham Von Troi** got a four-year sentence the next day.

The six other bloggers were given jail sentences on the same charges in Haiphong on 9 October. **Nguyen Xuan Nghia** (a writer) got six years. **Nguyen Van Tinh** and **Nguyen Manh Son** got three and a half years. **Nguyen Van Tuc** got four years. **Ngo Quynh** got three years and **Nguyen Kim Nhan** got two years.

Their trial lasted just a few hours.

They will all also have to serve varying periods of house arrest after their release from prison.

"If Vietnam's courts treat criticism of the government and calls for respect of human rights as national security violations and as defamatory propaganda, then these convictions are manifestly violations of free expression," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Criticising government policies and calling for democracy do not threaten Vietnam's national security," the press freedom organisation added. "We urge the authorities to retry these cases while respecting defence rights, which were blithely violated in these trials."

Article 88 of the criminal code forbids all "propaganda against the Communist system of government" as well as "slandorous allegations undermining national security, the social order and the people's trust in the Party."

In their offending posts, the bloggers had called for more political pluralism and democracy and respect for human rights. They also accused the Vietnamese authorities of failing to stand up to China's territorial claims over the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea because they were afraid offending Beijing.

The trial judges took the position that criticism of human rights violations and lack of democracy necessarily constitute article 88 violations as democracy and respect for human

rights already exist in Vietnam.

President Nguyen Minh Triet tried to convince the Vietnamese people and the rest of the world of this when he addressed the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September. Originally scheduled to take place the day before his address, these trials were postponed at the last minute.

US Representative Loretta Sanchez, a Californian Democrat, recently wrote to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: "I find it appalling that a country which blatantly acts in disregard to the UN Declaration will be acting as president of the UN Security Council in October."

Clinton said she raised the issue of human rights, especially free expression, when she met with her Vietnamese counterpart, Pham Gia Khiem, on 8 October.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is one of the 12 countries that Reporters Without Borders has identified as Enemies of the Internet. It was ranked 168th out of 173 countries in the 2008 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

06.10.2009 - Spate of blogger trials to start tomorrow, another blogger held incommunicado

Reporters Without Borders calls for the acquittal of all the writers, bloggers and pro-democracy activists who are about to be tried in various courts after unexplained delays, with a danger of long jail sentences being imposed. **Vu Hung's** trial in Hanoi tomorrow and **Pham Van Troi's** trial the day after are expected to be held without guarantees for defence rights.

Six other activists, who were arrested in September 2008 for various offences including posting criticism of government policies online and criticising China in writings or in protests, will thereafter be tried in Hai Phong. They are **Nguyen Xuan Nghia**, a writer who is a member of the Bloc 8406 pro-democracy movement, **Nguyen Van Tinh, Nguyen Manh Son, Nguyen Van Tuc, Ngo Quynh** and **Nguyen Kim Nhan**.

They face up to 20 years in prison on charges of "propaganda against the Socialist State of Vietnam" under article 88 of the criminal code. The date of the Hai Phong trials is not yet known but they may take place on 8 and 9 October.

"We urge the judicial authorities to dismiss the charges and release all these defendants without delay," Reporters Without Borders said. "We point out that the bloggers **Pham Doan Trang, Bui Thanh Hieu** and **Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh** were released after being arrested for the same reasons as Nguyen Xuan Nghia, Nguyen Huu Tinh, Nguyen Manh Son, Nguyen Van Tuc, Ngo Quynh and Nguyen Kim Nhan. The latter should be shown the same clemency as the sole reason for their arrests was the desire to suppress criticism of Vietnam's relations with China."

Dozens of people went to support Pham Van Troi in Hanoi on the morning of 24 September when his trial was originally to have taken place. His family travelled a great distance to be there. But it was postponed at the last minute, as was the trial of the six dissidents in Hai Phong.

A blogger known by the pen-name of "Dieu Cay" has been held in harsh conditions ever since his arrest in April 2008 for protesting against China's territorial claim to sovereignty over the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China sea. "We also demand his release on humanitarian grounds," Reporters Without Borders added.

Another cyber-dissident, **Nguyen Tien Trung**, will tomorrow begin his fourth month in detention in Ho Chi Minh City. Neither his family nor his lawyers have been able to see him since his arrest on 7 July on a charge of violating article 88 of the criminal code.

Finally, **Dao Duy Quat**, the editor of the ruling Communist Party's official website, has been fined 30 million Dong (1,700 dollars) for posting a Chinese newspaper article on 4 September about Chinese military exercises in the Paracel Islands that quoted a Chinese officer as saying their aim was to "defend the motherland's southern maritime border."

Ministry of Information and Communication inspector general Nguyen Van Hung said Dao Duy Quat had violated a decree banning the publication of unauthorised information.

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