

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/vietnam-after-court-rejects-appeal-rwb-18-02-2014,45891.html>

Asia - Vietnam

Jail term upheld

After court rejects appeal, RWB pledges to make blogger's voice heard

18 February 2014

As Vietnam's Communist Party regime continues to say nothing in response to its critics, a Hanoi appeal court today confirmed dissident lawyer and blogger **Le Quoc Quan's** 30-month jail sentence and fine of 40,000 euros on a trumped-up charge of tax fraud.

Reporters Without Borders is outraged by the decision and reiterates its call for the blogger's release.

"This sentence is designed to reinforce self-censorship and to deter all of Quan's supporters and independent information providers from continuing their fight," said Benjamin Ismaïl, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

"We condemn the way the hearing was conducted. Hundreds of people who had come to support Quan were kept away from the courthouse and only his mother and wife were allowed to attend.

"We also sound the alarm about Quan's state of health. He has been on hunger strike for the past 17 days in protest against the treatment he is receiving, and he briefly lost consciousness during today's hearing. So we call for his immediate release on humanitarian grounds.

"Our response to the Vietnamese authorities will not be long in coming. In the coming days, we will do everything possible to ensure that this blogger's voice can be heard more easily. We are going to start translating and circulating his articles so that more people can read his criticism of Vietnam's human rights violations – criticism that the authorities did not want to hear."

The close-circuit television feed to the journalists who were following today's hearing from a room adjoining the courtroom was immediately disconnected after the court announced its

decision, thereby censoring Quan's reaction, in which he criticized the ruling. Quan has no further legal recourse.

The demonstration outside the courthouse in support of Quan was unusually large for Vietnam, where the authorities are usually quick to crack down hard on street protests.



Today's ruling confirmed the sentence that Quan, 41, received at the end of his trial in Hanoi last October. Although charged with tax evasion, it was clear that the real reason for his arrest was his blogging and his calls for political pluralism, religious freedom and civil rights. His trial was originally scheduled to take place on 9 July, but was postponed at the last minute.

He was arrested in December 2012, one day after posting an article criticizing article 4 of the constitution, which assigns the Communist Party a leading role in managing the country's affairs.

Reporters Without Borders [tried unsuccessfully](#) to hand a petition to Vietnam's culture minister during his official visit to Paris last week. Signed by more than 32,000 people, it calls for the release of the bloggers currently detained in Vietnam.

You, too, can support Vietnam's bloggers:

Sign the [petition](#).

Support Vietnam's bloggers by helping them [to get equipment](#) (Global Giving)

Despite mounting repression, new citizen initiatives continue to appear online: [Former Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience \(FVPoC\)](#)

Ranked 174th out of 180 countries in the latest [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), Vietnam is the world's second biggest prison for bloggers and netizens.



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