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News Flash

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Vietnam: Leading elderly dissident to be freed

Amnesty International welcomes news of the imminent release of a leading dissident and prisoner of conscience. Colonel Pham Que Duong was sentenced at a hearing today in Ho Chi Minh City to 19 months imprisonment having been detained for over 18 months.

The 73-year-old a military historian, former editor and member of the Communist Party, was detained on 28 December 2002. He is a prominent critic of government policies, corruption and the repression of dissent. He was convicted of "abusing democratic rights to jeopardize the interests of the State, and the legitimate rights and interests of social organisations and citizens."

A fellow dissident, Professor Tran Khue, 69, who had been arrested at the same time as Pham Que Duong, was on 9 July given a similar sentence -- "time served" for a conviction on identical charges. Amnesty International is increasingly concerned that the judicial system is being manipulated in an illegal and arbitrary way to silence government critics. Several other elderly dissidents remain behind bars.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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