

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE SENTENCED

Vu Hung, a male teacher and pro-democracy activist, has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "conducting propaganda" against the state after a three-hour trial. He was arrested on 18 September 2008, after calling for democracy and peacefully protesting over a territory dispute with China. Vu Hung is a prisoner of conscience.

On 7 October, a court in the Vietnamese capital Ha Noi sentenced **Vu Hung** to three years' imprisonment and three years' probation, or house arrest, on release. Vu Hung is reported to have said at the trial: "I just want to contribute my little voice to make society better." In May 2009, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that his detention was arbitrary.

On 18 September 2008, law enforcement officials arrested Vu Hung and he was charged under Article 88 of the Penal Code, for "conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam". In the months immediately after his arrest, Vu Hung was repeatedly beaten during interrogations and went on hunger-strike in protest. He was taken to a Ministry of Public Security hospital on several occasions when his health had deteriorated. Concerns for his health and welfare increased when his whereabouts in the prison were unknown for more than two months in late 2008 and early 2009. His current place of detention and his state of health are unknown.

The Vietnamese authorities have targeted Vu Hung since 2006, because of his pro-democracy activism and his protests against government policies. In April 2008, he was among 14 people arrested during peaceful demonstrations against Chinese policies as the Olympic torch passed through Ho Chi Minh City. He was beaten by police before being released. Three months later he was reportedly dismissed from his job as a high school physics teacher.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Vietnamese or your own language calling on Vietnamese authorities:

- √ To immediately and unconditionally release Vu Hung;
- √ To ensure that he is not tortured and ill-treated in detention;
- √ To allow Vu Hung regular access to his family, and to a lawyer of his choice, and that he is provided proper medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Pham Gia Khiem
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Fax: + 8443 823 1872
Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Public Security
Le Hong Anh
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Ha Noi
Viet Nam

Fax: + 8443 942 0223
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Viet Nam accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 18/09 (ASA 41/001/2009). Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA41/001/2009/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Freedom of expression and association is strictly controlled in Viet Nam. Dissidents who are critical of government policies and speak out about human rights violations face a range of sanctions to silence them. These include surveillance by local police, restrictions on movement, interference with home utilities such as phone lines and internet access, arbitrary questioning and detention by police, arrest and imprisonment. There are also cases where authorities have used arbitrary detention in mental health institutions against outspoken critics and activists.

At least 30 dissidents have been handed long prison sentences, since a series of arrests began in 2006 after a short-lived period of tolerance to increased web-based activism challenging the government. Another wave of arrests began in May 2009. At least 12 dissidents are held in pre-trial detention.

The law enforcement agencies arbitrarily use the Penal Code to stifle and criminalize peaceful dissent, in breach of international human rights treaties that Viet Nam has ratified. Restrictions and regulations on internet use penalize freedom of expression on topics deemed sensitive, including human rights and advocacy of democracy. Recent regulations on blogging enacted in December 2008 restrict content to personal matters, and prohibit dissemination of anti-government material, and "undermining national security".

Further Information on UA: 18/09 Index: ASA 41/008/2009 Issue Date: 09 October 2009

