

**Congressional Hearing on Human Rights Abuses by Vietnamese Authorities**  
**June 17, 2015**

**Statement by Nguyen Van Hai (Dieu Cay)**  
**Free Journalists Club of Vietnam**

**Testimony delivered in translation**  
**by Dan Hoang, spokesperson of Viet Tan**

Distinguished Members of Congress,

I am honored to be here today to present to the US Congress the issue of human rights in Vietnam.

Shortly before leaving Vietnam, my fellow prisoners entrusted me to relay their cries for help to the international community; to help the international community understand that the persecution of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam is systemic; to lay bare the deceit of the Vietnam authorities when they commit to revise Vietnamese laws in order to participate in international trade agreement but do not implement such laws.

1/ Freedom of the press, freedom of speech

All media in Vietnam is in the hands of the communist regime. The people don't have a platform to raise their voice. People do not dare to speak their views, simply because any disagreement with the ruling party can get you arrested under vague laws such as Articles 258, 88, and 79 of the Criminal Code. A conviction under one of these statutes can result in a dozen years in prison. It is these vague laws that allow authorities to arrest and imprison anyone with differing opinions and to maintain their dictatorship.

My case is a testament to the suppression of human rights in Vietnam when I was sentenced to over ten years in prison simply for peacefully expressing my political views.

Only when people are able to speak freely, are free to express their opinions without fear of repression, can society change for the better. Hence, we need to pressure the communist authorities to abolish the absurd laws and to return freedom of the press and freedom of expression to the people of Vietnam.

2/ Prisoners of conscience

I spent 6 years and 6 months in 11 communist prisons, so I know that the prisons in Vietnam are administered by circulars and regulations, not by laws. For example, Circular 37 of the Ministry of Public Security deprives prisoners of the rights prescribed in the Criminal Procedures Code.

Based on Circular 37, Vietnam's Public Security has established a series of prisons within prisons to detain political prisoners--placing in solitary confinement for months those prisoners who refuse to admit guilt, leaving many prisoners to go on hunger strikes to protest. (I myself went on hunger strike twice. The first time for 28 days in Prison Camp B34, and the second time for 33 days in Prison Camp 6 of the Ministry of Public Security).

Recently, Ms. Ta Phong Tan--a member of the Club of Free Journalists--went on hunger strike on 13 May 2015 to protest the abuse of political prisoners by officials of Prison Camp 5, Yen Dinh, Thanh Hoa, especially their use of solitary confinement. Circular 37 of the Ministry of Public Security is an instrument to punish dissenters outside of the legal code.

Prisoners are deprived of the rights stated in the law, especially when prisoners who wish to submit a complaint must first go through the jailers, who of course never forward on the complaints but instead take revenge on the prisoners.

Oversight bodies and Vietnamese law do not provide inmates the opportunity to exercise their right to protest ill-treatment as prescribed in the Criminal Procedures Code.

To ensure basic human rights for all prisoners, to prevent political prisoners as well as prisoners of criminal offenses from being treated like animals, the Vietnam government must abolish Circular 37 of the Ministry of Public Security and revise the Criminal Procedures Code in accordance with international standards.

I earnestly call upon governments and international organizations to pressure the Vietnamese authorities to:

- abolish vague laws such as Articles 258, 88, 79 of the Criminal Code, Decree 72 by the Prime Minister, and Circular 37 of the Ministry of Public Security
- revise domestic laws to be in compliance with international conventions to which Vietnam is a signatory
- release all political prisoners

I submit a list of prisoners of conscience in need of emergency assistance:

- 1/ Ta Phong Tan
- 2/ Tran Huynh Duy Thuc
- 3/ Nguyen Huu Vinh
- 4/ Bui Thi Minh Hang
- 5/ Tran Vu Anh Binh
- 6/ Vo Minh Tri (Viet Khang)
- 7/ Nguyen Dang Minh Man
- 8/ Ho Bich Khuong
- 9/ Doan Van Vuon
- 10/ Doan Dinh Nam
- 11/ Doan Huy Chuong
- 12/ Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung
- 13/ Dang Xuan Dieu
- 14/ Ho Duc Hoa

Thank you for your attention.