

INTERNATIONAL PEN

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RAPID ACTION NETWORK

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VIETNAM: Crackdown on dissidents.

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN is alarmed about an apparent crackdown on dissent in Vietnam, in which a number of writers have been arrested in recent weeks. This brings the total number of writers detained in Vietnam to sixteen. International PEN calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained in Vietnam for the peaceful exercise of their right to free expression, in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam is a signatory.

According to PEN's information, a number of writers are amongst those to have been arrested as part of a crackdown on peaceful protests carried out by dissidents in recent weeks. The arrests are apparently part of a wider pattern of harassment and arrest by Vietnamese authorities of independent journalists, human rights activists, cyber dissidents, religious freedom advocates, and farmers protesting confiscation of their land. Those currently detained or under heavy surveillance include:

- **Nguyen Van Hai (aka Nguyen Hoang Hai/Dieu Cay):** independent journalist and blogger, sentenced on 10 September 2008 to two and a half years-imprisonment by the Vietnamese People's Court at Ho Chi Minh city for alleged tax fraud, although he is widely believed to be targeted for his criticism of Vietnamese government policy. He is known for his critical internet postings calling for greater democracy and human rights in Vietnam and his participation in protests against Chinese foreign policy. Dieu Cay was one of the founding members of the Club of Free Journalists (Cau Lac Bo Nha Bao Tu Do) in 2006.
- **Nguyen Xuan Nghia,** poet and writer, member of the Hai Phong Association of writers and founding member of the banned democracy movement known as Block 8406, author of several online poems and articles, a recipient of the 2008 Hellman Hammet Award for Free Expression. Arrested on 11 September 2008. Held at the B14 labour camp in Ha Dong province, south of Hanoi.

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- **Le Thi Kim Thu** (f), online reporter and photographer, arrested on 14 August 2008, detained at Hoa Lo detention camp outside Hanoi; known for her reports for various overseas Vietnamese media outlets.
- **Pham Van Troi**, dissident writer and activist, known for his contributions to the underground dissident review *Tu Do Dan Chu (Freedom and Democracy)*. Arrested on 10 September 2008 and detained at the B14 labour camp, in Ha Dong province, south of Hanoi.
- **Nguyen Van Tuc**, farmer, poet and human rights defender, known for his numerous writings on social injustice and satirical poems published on overseas websites. Arrested on 10 September 2008 and detained at the B14 labour camp, in Ha Dong province, south of Hanoi.
- **Ngô Quỳnh**, student and dissident writer, author of online dissenting articles, including ‘Viet Nam needs to compile a new History-book’ and ‘Journey to Lang Son’s Dairy’, published on overseas websites. Arrested on 10 September 2008 and detained at the B14 labour camp, in Ha Dong province, south of Hanoi.
- **Tran Duc Thach**, poet. Reportedly arrested on 10 September 2008, released the same day but remains under heavy surveillance.
- **Pham Thanh Nghien** (f): Internet writer and independent journalist. Arrested on 11 September 2008, released later that day but remained under residential surveillance until her re-arrest on 17 September 2008. Thought to be held under Article 88 of the Criminal Code on charges of ‘propaganda against the state’.

For further information go to:

Human Rights Watch article, ‘Vietnam: New Round of Arrests Target Democracy Activists’
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/09/11/vietna19796.htm>

IFEX alerts and reports on freedom of expression in Vietnam:
<http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/164/>

For the BBC’s country profile:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1243338.stm

Please send appeals:

- Expressing alarm at the recent crackdown on dissident in Vietnam, in which a number of writers have been detained;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained for the peaceful exercise of their right to free expression, in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam is a signatory.

Appeals to be sent to:

His Excellency Nguyễn Minh Triết
President, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

C/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hanoi
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Prime Minister Nguyễn Tân Dũng

1 Hoang Hoa Tham Street
Hanoi
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Lê Doan Hop, Minister of Culture and Information

1 Hoang Hoa Tham Street
Hanoi
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Please note that there are no fax numbers available for the Vietnamese authorities, so you may wish to ask the diplomatic representative for Vietnam in your country to forward your appeals. It would also be advantageous to ask your country's diplomatic representatives in Vietnam to intervene in the case.

For some Vietnamese embassies in the world:

<http://www.embassiesabroad.com/embassies-of/Vietnam>

*****Please send appeals immediately. Check with International PEN if sending appeals after 15 October 2008. *****

For further information please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN Writers in Prison Committee, Brownlow House, 50/51 High Holborn, London WC1V 6ER, Tel. + 44 (0) 20 7405 0338, Fax: +44 (0) 20 7405 0339, email: cathy.mccann@internationalpen.org.uk