



December 15, 2017

Rights Groups Welcome EU Resolution, Call for Release of Vietnamese Human Rights Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai

International human rights organisations welcome the European Parliament’s decision to pass a resolution addressing the ongoing crackdown on freedom of expression in Vietnam.

With a notable mention to the case of imprisoned video journalist Nguyen Van Hoa who was sentenced to 7 years prison and 3 years house arrest two weeks ago, the European Parliament expressed its concerns regarding the rise of bloggers and human rights defenders who have been arrested over the past year. At least 25 peaceful activists have been arrested, issued arrest warrants or exiled this year in Vietnam.

The European Parliament resolution comes days before the second anniversary of Nguyen Van Dai’s arrest. The prominent human rights lawyer and blogger was arbitrarily detained on December 16, 2015 while on his way to meet with the European Union delegation to Vietnam.

Nguyen Van Dai was initially charged with “conducting propaganda against the State” under the Vietnamese Penal Code. Authorities have now changed the sweeping charges to “attempting to overthrow the State.” If convicted, he could face the death penalty. At least seven of Nguyen Van Dai’s colleagues from the Brotherhood for Democracy were also arrested this year and charged under these vague and overly broad national security laws that contravene international criminal law requirements of certainty.

The EU Resolution also mentioned that draconian laws in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were in “breach of international human rights law”, and that national security concerns should not be “used as a pretext for the suppression of human rights”. This mirrors the decision in the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention’s June 8, 2017 decision regarding Nguyen Van Dai, where the working group concluded that his detention was arbitrary and illegal, and cautioned that “under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty in violation of the rules of international law may constitute crimes against humanity”.

A coalition of international and Vietnamese organisations launched a campaign “**Stop the Crackdown in Vietnam**” following wrongful convictions and unjust lengthy prison sentences against peaceful Vietnamese bloggers and human rights defenders. We congratulate the European Parliament for addressing the alarming crackdown in Vietnam and encourage EU member states to continue pressing for the unconditional release of all Vietnamese political prisoners. We urge European embassies in Hanoi to reach out to the families of political prisoners and to publicly raise their cases.

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Defend the Defenders
Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada
Reporters Without Borders
Viet Tan

Bau Bi Tuong Than Association
Chan Hung Nuooc Viet
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