

Prime Minister
Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
Prime Minister's Office
Hà Nội
VIETNAM

21st, February, 2017

Your Excellency,

The reason I am writing to you is to express my most profound concern regarding the unrelated detention of three human rights defenders, **Trần Thị Nga**, **Nguyễn Văn Oai** and **Nguyễn Văn Hóa**, arrested in January and held incommunicado ever since.

Trần Thị Nga is a member of the Vietnamese Women for Human Rights group and was charged under Article 88 of the Penal Code for “conducting propaganda” against the state as she posted videos and documents detrimental to the state. If convicted, she faces up to 20 years imprisonment. **Nguyễn Văn Oai** is a Catholic social activist currently serving a three year probation period following his four year prison sentence that ended in August 2015. He was charged under Article 257 of the Penal Code for resisting officials on duty which could put him in prison for another seven years. **Nguyễn Văn Hóa** is a blogger from Kỳ Anh district in Hà Tĩnh province. He was detained under Article 258 of the Penal Code for “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State and the rights and legitimate interests of organizations and citizens”, possibly for helping fishermen affected by the Formosa ecological disaster. If convicted, he faces a prison sentence up to seven years. All three of them held incommunicado before the trial with no access to lawyers or to their families.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are harsh and fall short of the minimum requirements set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. This is in direct violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture (CAT), to which Vietnam is a state party. Thus, I wish to plead to you to ensure that these regulations are respected, and they are not subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. I would also like to urge you to allow their families to visit and enable correspondence with a lawyer and a doctor, if necessary.

Amnesty International considers Trần Thị Nga, Nguyễn Văn Oai and Nguyễn Văn Hóa prisoners of conscience. Ultimately, I wish to appeal to the Vietnamese authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally. They were solely imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their dissenting political beliefs. I am very concerned that although freedom of opinion and expression are guaranteed in the Constitution of Vietnam, as the practice of these rights is strictly controlled by the state in law, thus effectively criminalizing those peacefully expressing their beliefs and opinions.

Yours sincerely,