

The human rights situation in Vietnam

FIDH member organisations, gathered at its 42nd Congress in Bogotá, Colombia,

- **Considering** that Vietnam no longer confines itself to repressing dissidents, but harasses, intimidates, imprisons, sentences, sometimes to very harsh prison terms, anyone who dares to express the slightest criticism or who works for legitimate causes such as workers' rights or those of the environment,
- **Considering** that Vietnam pursues, harasses, and sometimes forcibly repatriates its citizens from abroad, as is the case of blogger Dương Văn Thái (forcibly repatriated in 2024), and Montagnard human rights defender Y Quynh Bdap (threatened with extradition from Thailand) and Buddhist monk Thích Minh Tuệ (reported to the Sri Lankan authorities as a 'threat to public order'), and that Vietnam assisted China in arresting Tibetan monk Tulku Hungar Dorje in Ho Chi Minh City where he died in detention under questionable circumstances,
- **Considering** that Vietnamese laws such as the articles in the Criminal Code on offences against 'national security', the Press Law, the Law on Belief and Religion, the Cybersecurity Law, and the provisions against so-called 'fake news' on social media are incompatible with international law and are designed to legalise repression,
- **Considering** that Vietnamese regulations limit the freedom of Vietnamese and international NGOs operating in Vietnam through registration and funding requirements and aim to restrict and control the role of civil society, particularly in the areas of human rights and those of the environment,
- **Considering** that the recent Decree 126/2024/ND-CP on civil society organisations is the government's revival of a bill rejected by the Vietnamese National Assembly and that due to the control that the one-party state has over all aspects of the functioning of said organisations (creation, operation, membership, etc.), it reduces them to mere cogs in the one-party state's machinery,
- **Considering** that the recent Decree 147/2024/ND-CP on Internet services reinforces censorship and repression of free expression by requiring Internet operators to monitor and censor 'anti-state' content and to block any account within 48 hours at the request of the authorities
- **Considering** that despite the reduction in the number of crimes punishable by death, Vietnam continues to hand down death sentences for crimes that cannot be regarded as 'the most serious crimes' under Article 6 of the ICCPR and that the articles on offences against 'national security' punishable with the death penalty do not distinguish between acts of violence and the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression and that trials do not guarantee the rights of the defence,
- **Considering** that the number of convictions and executions is among the highest in Southeast Asia and that persons who are sentenced to death are shackled for 23 hours and 45 minutes a day and held in inhumane conditions and that many of them have been awaiting execution for over 10 years because the Head of State is 'too busy' to sign the execution warrant,
- **Considering** that FIDH and VCHR, with the support of their partner organisations, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Global Witness, have lodged a complaint with the European Commission denouncing the violation of the 2020 EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) due to the repression in Vietnam of activists working for sustainable development, environmental protection, and workers' rights,

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Condemn the systematic repression of dissenting or discordant voices and of Vietnamese civil society in general, through an almost uninterrupted series of acts of harassment, arrests and arbitrary convictions, sometimes with very severe sentences against human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, and other activists, as well as the brutal dispersal of demonstrations, internet censorship, etc.;

Recall in this regard that dissident Phạm Chí Dũng was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2021 for calling for improvements in the human rights situation before any ratification of the EVFTA and call for his immediate and unconditional release and that of all other unjustly imprisoned persons in a video message to the European Parliament;

Denounce the systematic repression of civil society, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, bloggers, land rights and workers' rights activists, and members of unrecognised religions and are particularly alarmed by the systematic convictions of environmental defenders, often using "tax evasion" as a pretext;

Condemn Vietnam's policy of transnational repression against its own citizens who have sought asylum abroad and against foreigners who have sought asylum on its territory;

Condemn Vietnamese authorities for their use of the 'law' to justify their practices that violate the most fundamental rights and legalise arbitrary actions at the expense of Vietnamese citizens and civil society;

Demand that in this regard, Vietnamese laws and regulations be immediately brought in line with Vietnam's international human rights obligations and call on the Vietnamese authorities to cooperate in good faith with the UN and the international community to this end;

Condemn the unacceptable and dangerous restrictions placed on local and international NGOs in Vietnam, particularly with regard to their funding and freedom of action and Decree 126/2024/ND-CP, which effectively abolishes the right to freedom of association;

Call for a moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to its abolition, and in the interests of transparency, the publication of all relevant information concerning the death penalty in Vietnam (statistics on convictions, executions, prisoners on death row, products used for lethal injections, etc.).

Call upon, once again, the European Union, which is bound to Vietnam by the EVFTA, to use all means at its disposal to urge Vietnam to respect its commitments on trade and equitable development, particularly in the areas of workers' rights and those of environment; and

Fully support, in this regard, the complaint lodged with the European Commission for Vietnam's violation of the EVFTA and will mobilise all possible resources to ensure its success.