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Viet Nam's crackdown on human rights defenders working on sustainable development:

A non-exhaustive list of defenders and members of civil society organisations who are being arbitrarily detained and must be released immediately



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Table of contents

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Luu Van Vinh | 3 |
| Nguyen Van Duc Do | 3 |
| Hoang Duc Binh | 4 |
| Le Dinh Luong | 4 |
| Nguyen Trung Ton | 5 |
| Truong Minh Duc | 5 |
| Nguyen Trung Truc | 6 |
| Nguyen Van Tuc | 6 |
| Nguyen Nang Tinh | 7 |
| Pham Van Diep | 7 |
| Pham Chi Dung | 8 |
| Nguyen Tuong Thuy | 8 |
| Le Huu Minh Tuan | 9 |
| Nguyen Thi Tam | 9 |
| Can Thi Theu | 10 |
| Trinh Ba Phuong | 10 |
| Trinh Ba Tu | 11 |
| Pham Doan Trang | 11 |
| Le Trong Hung | 12 |
| Le Van Dung | 12 |
| Dang Dinh Bach | 13 |
| Do Nam Trung | 14 |
| Bui Van Thuan | 15 |
| Tran Quoc Khanh | 16 |
| Dinh Van Hai | 16 |
| Le Manh Ha | 17 |
| Truong Van Dung | 17 |
| Nguyen Lan Thang | 18 |
| Nguyen Son Lo | 18 |
| Dang Dang Phuoc | 19 |
| Ngo Thi To Nhien | 19 |
| Nguyen Vu Binh | 20 |
| Hoang Viet Khanh | 20 |
| Nguyen Chi Tuyen | 21 |
| Nguyen Van Binh | 21 |
| Vu Minh Tien | 22 |



Luu Van Vinh
(sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, expected release: 6 November 2031)

Arrested in November 2016 and sentenced in October 2018 to 15 years in prison for **"carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people's administration"** (Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code). Detained for advocating for the creation of the **Viet Nam National Coalition** (Lien Minh Dan Toc Viet Nam) and participating in peaceful protests, including those concerning the **Formosa pollution disaster**. He also campaigned for the rights of farmers and the repeal of Article 258 of the 1999 Penal Code on "abusing the right to freedom and democracy to infringe upon the interests of the state". His detention was recognised as arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and directly related to his activities to organise, associate and raise awareness about the **Formosa disaster**:

The appropriate remedy would be to release Mr. Vinh immediately [...] and to bring its laws, including any equivalent of Article 79 in the revised Penal Code, into conformity with the recommendations made in the present opinion and with the commitments made by Viet Nam under international human rights law. [...] Furthermore, in view of Mr. Vinh's work in environmental protection, including his protests against the illegal dumping of toxic industrial waste into Viet Nameese waters, the Working Group also refers this matter to: (a) the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; and (b) the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. [[A/HRC/WGAD/2018/35](#).]



Nguyen Van Duc Do
(sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, expected release: 6 November 2027)

Arrested in November 2016, he was sentenced in October 2018 to 11 years in prison for **"carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people's administration"**, under Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code. Nguyen Van Duc Do is detained for his membership of the **Viet Nam National Coalition** after participating in environmental protests and demonstrations concerning the **Formosa ecological disaster**. He also joined labour rights activists to campaign for workers' interests [[AI](#); [HRW2024](#)].



Hoang Duc Binh (sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment, expected release: 15 May 2031)

Arrested in May 2017, he was sentenced to 14 years in prison for **"resisting a person on public duty"** and **"abusing the rights to freedom and democracy to infringe upon the interests of the State"** (Articles 330 and 331 of the 2015 Penal Code). He is detained for **sharing information on the Formosa environmental disaster, defending fisherfolks, and advocating for the creation of an independent trade union** [UA VNM 2/2018]. The UN concluded that the detention was arbitrary and called for his immediate release:

The Working Group considers that posting material about State policy on social media, joining and establishing various associations, such as the **Viet Nam Labour Movement** or the **Association of Central Fishermen**, and blocking a major road with a vehicle do not amount to acts of inciting others to cause public disorder or violence. [...] **Finally, the Working Group is also of the view that Mr. Binh was engaging in advocacy relating directly to government policies in Viet Nam and was deprived of his liberty as a result of exercising his right to take part in the conduct of public affairs.** [...] The deprivation of liberty of Hoang Duc Binh is arbitrary. [...] The appropriate remedy would be to release Mr. Binh immediately [...]. [A/HRC/WGAD/2018/45]



Le Dinh Luong (sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 July 2037)

Arrested on 24 July 2017 and sentenced on 16 August 2018 to 20 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"conducting activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration"** (Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code). The sentence was upheld on appeal on 10 August 2018. He was detained for posting about protests regarding the Formosa environmental disaster, defending fisherpersons and dispossessed farmers. He also signed a petition against bauxite mining in the central highlands [HRW 2024; A/HRC/WGAD/2019/45; AL VNM 6/2017U; AL VNM 6/2021]. His detention has been recognised arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention:

Mr. Luong was convicted for exercising his right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, right to freedom of association and his right to take part in the conduct of public affairs. [...] As the Working Group has observed, there also appears to be a broader pattern in Viet Nam of detaining human rights defenders for their work, including activists who have attempted to raise awareness about the Formosa steel plant. The Working Group has made findings to this effect in recent years, and finds the present case to be another example. [A/HRC/WGAD/2019/45]



Arrested in July 2017 and sentenced in April 2018 to 12 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people's administration"** (Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code). A Protestant pastor, he was detained for being a **founding member of Brotherhood for Democracy** and for the activities he carried out from March 2013 to July 2017, during which he wrote about **land confiscation** and campaigned around the **Formosa disaster** [HRW 2024; AL VNM 6/2017]. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considered that Nguyen Trung Ton was convicted for exercising his rights of association and participation to public affairs notably in the Formosa case. The UN WGAD asked for his immediate release and for the revision of **Article 79 of the Penal Code** [A/HRC/WGAD/2018/46].

Nguyen Trung Ton

(sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, expected release: 30 July 2029)



Arrested in July 2017, he was sentenced in April 2018 to 12 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people's administration"**, under Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code. Detained for being a **member of Brotherhood for Democracy** and for the activities held in that capacity from March 2013 to July 2017. He also joined the **Free Viet Labour Federation** (2014-2016) and the **Viet Labour Movement** (since 2016). He had campaigned about the **Formosa disaster, land rights, and labour rights** before his arrest [FIDH/VCHR/OBS; VCHR, 2009; VCHR, 2018; HRW, 2024; AL VNM 6/2017].

Truong Minh Duc

(sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, expected release: 30 July 2029)



Nguyen Trung Truc
(sentenced to 12 years'
imprisonment, expected
release: 4 August 2029)

Arrested in August 2017, he was sentenced in September 2018 to 12 years in prison for **"carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people's administration"** (Article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code). On 26 December 2018, his appeal was rejected. He was detained for his affiliation to **the Brotherhood for Democracy** group and his support to victims of the **Formosa environmental disaster** [AL VNM 6/2021]. The United Nations found that Nguyen Trung Truc had been convicted for exercising his rights of association and participation in public affairs:

[Truc's] activities included launching an independent human rights news television station, advocacy and blogging on human rights issues, and calling for justice and adequate compensation for the victims of the Formosa environmental disaster. [A/HRC/WGAD/2018/46]



Nguyen Van Tuc
(sentenced to 13 years'
imprisonment, expected
release: 1 September 2030)

Arrested in September 2017 and sentenced in April 2018 to 13 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration"** (Article 79 of the Penal Code). He was detained for being a member of the Brotherhood for Democracy and for his activities of disseminating distorted information, organising and leading illegal gatherings, and propaganda aimed at overthrowing the people's administration. Nguyen Van Tuc began campaigning against the corruption and **land confiscations** that took place in the early 2000s in his hometown of Dong La, a commune in the Dong Hung district of the Thai Binh province [HRW 2024; AL VNM 6/2017].



Nguyen Nang Tinh
(sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, expected release: 29 May 2030)

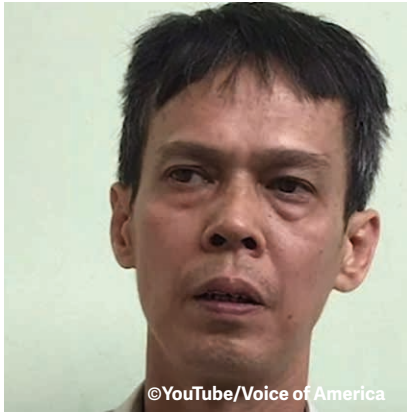
Arrested in May 2019 and sentenced in November 2019 to 11 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRV)"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He is detained for posting information on Facebook on the impacts of a draft law on Special Economic Zones, as well as messages about the government's inadequate response to environmental and social issues, including the **Formosa ecological disaster** and its financial impact on affected communities. His detention has been recognised arbitrary by the UN and directly linked to his contribution to the public scrutiny of government policy:

[P]osting material about State policy on social media and joining and establishing various associations do not amount to acts of inciting others to cause public disorder or violence. [...] **Mr. Tinh's work as an activist contributed to public scrutiny of government policy.** [...] The Working Group concludes that Mr. Tinh's detention resulted from the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association as well as of his right to **take part in the conduct of public affairs.** [\[A/HRC/WGAD/2021/36\]](#)



Pham Van Diep
(sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment, expected release: 29 June 2028)

Arrested on 29 June 2019 and sentenced on 26 November 2019 to 9 years in prison for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Pham Van Diep, is a human rights and pro-democracy blogger. He participated in protests against Formosa after the toxic waste spill in 2016 as well as against the draft laws on Cybersecurity and Special Economic Zones in June 2018. He took legal action against the police for using disproportionate force, which a court rejected, and then petitioned the government to protest the decision. He was detained for his actions and statements on social and political issues such as land confiscation, police brutality, corruption, and the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong [\[HRW 2024; Project88\]](#).



Pham Chi Dung

(sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, expected release: 21 November 2034)

Arrested on 21 November 2019 and sentenced on 5 January 2021 to 15 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He was detained for being president of the Independent Journalists Association of Viet Nam (IAJVN) and sharing information on socio-economic issues in Viet Nam, including views on the ratification of the EVFTA. He has also worked on labour rights and civic space [53/HR.VNM.2020], engaging with UN human rights bodies and providing information to other Vietnamese NGOs engaged with UN special procedures and treaty bodies. He followed the negotiations on the establishment of an EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) [AL VMN 5/2019; BHRRCphamchidung].

Dung was arrested two days after sending **a video message to the European Parliament urging the postponement of EVFTA ratification pending concrete human rights progress in Viet Nam** [AL VMN 5/2019; BHRRCphamchidung; AL VMN 5/2019; UN SRs 2021.01; VCHR]. During the search, police officers reportedly forced Dung to log on to his computer and print certain documents that related to IJAVN's work and its advocacy activities with the European Union [AL VMN 5/2019; UN SRs 2021.01]. He has defended the **environment and labour rights**, the creation of trade unions, access to independent information, the rule of law and the **development of civil society**. He **criticised Viet Nam's amended labour code**, saying it did not represent progress for labour rights as it did not allow free trade unions. Two other members of IJAVN, Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan, received 11-year prison sentences at the same trial (see below). Many others affiliated with the organisation have also been harassed. Commenting on these sentences, UN Special Rapporteurs called for their immediate release and declared:

The convictions and long sentences are not only a blatant suppression of independent journalism but also **a clear attempt to create a chilling effect** among those willing to criticise the government. [...] We are deeply disturbed at the continued use of Article 117 of the Penal Code which [...] appears to be aimed at **silencing those who seek to [...] share information with others**. [UN SRs 2021.01]



Nguyen Tuong Thuy

(sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, expected release: 23 May 2031)

Arrested on 23 May 2020 and sentenced on 5 January 2021 to 11 years in prison for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He is a member of the Independent Journalists Association of Viet Nam (IAJVN).



Le Huu Minh Tuan

(sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, expected release: 12 June 2031)

Arrested on 23 May 2020 and sentenced on 12 June 2020 to 11 years in prison for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Tuan is in extremely poor health due to harsh detention conditions in Xuyên Moc prison, in the Ba Ria province, but has been denied medical care in violation of Viet Nam's 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgements. Member of the Independent Journalists' Association of Viet Nam (IAJVN).



Nguyen Thi Tam

(sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 June 2026)

Arrested on 24 June 2020 and sentenced to 6 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). A well-known land rights defender since 2008, when the authorities seized her family's land in the commune of Duong Noi. She was accused of sharing information on the Dong Tam incident. Together with Can Thi Theu, Trinh Ba Tu and Trinh Ba Phuong (see below), she tried to access legal remedies for state confiscations of land. She has been arrested and convicted on several occasions before [\[AL VNM 6/2021\]](#); [BHRRCTam](#); [HRW 2024](#); [AL VNM 5/2020](#). The UN denounced the arrest as arbitrary:

The vaguely worded articles 117 and 88 of the 2015 and 1999 Penal Codes, and the characterisation therein of imparting information on alleged human rights violations as "propaganda" and as information that is "against the State". Such a characterisation [...] is concerning for its repudiation of their role in civil society. [\[AL VNM 5/2020\]](#)

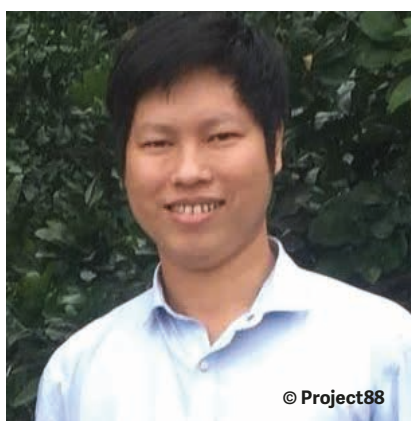


Can Thi Theu

(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 June 2028)

Arrested on 24 June 2020 and sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). She was detained for sharing information and posting an online video on the Dong Tam incident. Can Thi Theu and her two sons, Trinh Ba Tu and Trinh Ba Phuong, have been involved in defending land rights, documenting land seizures and demanding payment of adequate compensation since their family's farmland was confiscated by the authorities in Duong Noi in 2008. She was arrested and convicted on several occasions for her commitment to defending land rights [HRW; AL VNM 5/2020]. The UN denounced the arbitrary arrest:

The vaguely worded articles 117 and 88 of the 2015 and 1999 Penal Codes, and the characterisation therein of imparting information on alleged human rights violations as "propaganda" and as information that is "against the State". Such a characterisation [...] is concerning for its repudiation of their role in civil society. [AL VNM 5/2020]



Trinh Ba Phuong

(sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 June 2030)

Arrested on 24 June 2020 and sentenced to 10 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He was detained for sharing information on the **Dong Tam incident**. He has joined his mother Can Thi Theu and his younger brother Trinh Ba Tu in numerous demonstrations and campaigns for human rights, land rights and environmental protection. He extensively documented alleged human rights violations in Dong Tam and had a strong presence on Facebook, where he shared information and raised awareness about the issue at national level among his 50,000 followers [AL VNM 5/2020]. The UN denounced the arbitrary arrest of him and his family members [AL VNM 5/2020].



Trinh Ba Tu

(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 June 2028)

Arrested on 24 June 2020 and sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He was detained for sharing information on the Dong Tam incident. Trinh Ba Tu is a land rights activist who is actively fighting land confiscation. He was arrested on several occasions, most recently in 2020 for sharing on social media testimonies from Dong Tam villagers about alleged incidents of police brutality or raids [AL VNM 5/2020; AL VNM 6/2021; HRW]. The UN denounced the arbitrary arrest of him and his family members [AL VNM 5/2020].



Pham Doan Trang

(sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment, expected release: 6 October 2029)

Arrested on 6 October 2020 and sentenced to 9 years in prison for **"conducting propaganda against the State"** (Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code). She was detained for sharing information on **land, civil society and environmental issues**. Pham Doan Trang is an award-winning **human rights defender, writer and blogger** who has written and advocated on a range of human rights issues, including freedom of expression, citizen participation, police violence, environmental rights and politics. In November 2017, she was arrested after meeting with a European Union delegation preparing for the annual EU-Viet Nam bilateral human rights dialogue. In October 2020, police arrested Pham Doan Trang after she published the Dong Tam Report, which sheds light on the land dispute [HRW 2024; AL VNM 6/2021]. Her in-depth report on the Formosa incident ("An Overview of the Marine Life Disaster in Viet Nam") was also cited as "incriminating evidence" by the prosecution at her trial. She is also founder of the online law and human rights magazine Luật Khoa, and co-founder of Green Trees, the only underground pro-democracy environmental rights organisation in Viet Nam [Martin Ennals Award; AL VNM 5/2020].

The UN qualified the detention as arbitrary [A/HRC/WGAD/2021/40]. The UN Special Rapporteurs, having noted that the human rights defender had not taken part in the Dong Tam incident itself, stated:

We are **particularly concerned** by the criminalisation of these human rights defenders under the **vaguely worded articles 117 and 88 of the 2015 and 1999 Penal Codes**, and the characterization therein of **imparting information** on alleged human rights **violations as "propaganda" and as information that is "against the State"**. Such a characterization of the legitimate work of human rights **defenders** is **concerning for its repudiation of their role in civil society**. While we condemn the violence that took place among a small group of Dong Tam residents, we are deeply concerned that the allegations above ultimately relate to the restriction of the right to opinion and expression, online as well as offline, particularly when such speech is critical of State action or policy. [AL VNM 5/2020]



Le Trong Hung

(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 29 March 2026)

Arrested on 29 March 2021, he was sentenced in December 2021 to 5 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code) [HRW 2024]. Le Trong Hung participated in environmental conservation protests. In February 2021, he announced his intention to run as an independent candidate in the National Assembly elections. His programme also included a call to amend the constitution and repeal articles granting supremacy to the Communist Party of Viet Nam (Article 4), allowing only one trade union (Article 10), and confirming state ownership of all land, water and natural resources (Article 53). In relation to Le Trong Hung's case, the UN denounced:

[a] **deliberate and systematic attempt to intimidate and silence** human rights defenders, **civil society** organisations, journalists, and political activists. [...] We respectfully urge [...] to halt the application of Articles 117 and 331 of the Penal Code, and to immediately and unconditionally release the individuals [...]. There is concern that this **contributes to an environment of fear leading to self-censorship and deterring others from cooperating or sharing information** with the UN. [AL VNM 4/2021]



Le Van Dung

(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 30 June 2026)

Arrested on 30 June 2021 and sentenced to 5 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Already in 2012, Le Van Dung travelled to sites of forced land confiscation to film local authorities' violence against farmers in the Vu Ban district of Nam Dinh province. He joined other activists to independently investigate the mass loss of sea life caused by the Formosa environmental disaster. In 2017, he and fellow activists interviewed and provided advice to farmers facing land confiscation and people who suffered persecution. Le Van Dung attempted to run as an independent candidate for the National Assembly in the May 2021 elections, but the local authorities ensured that he was disqualified. On 28 May, five days after the election, police issued an arrest warrant for him. Commenting on the June 2021 arrest, the UN said:

There is concern that [the deliberate and systematic attempt to intimidate and silence human rights defenders] **contributes to an environment of fear leading to self-censorship and deterring others from cooperating or sharing information** with the UN. [AL VNM 4/2021]



Dang Dinh Bach
(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 24 June 2026)

Arrested on 24 June 2021 and sentenced in January 2022 to 5 years in prison under charge of **"tax evasion"** (Article 200 of the Penal Code). He was detained for his activities working on **environment, land eviction issues and participation of civil society** and communities in public affairs. He refused to plead guilty and rejected the government's demands to repay alleged tax returns. As a result, his sentence was upheld on appeal. He is detained under extremely harsh conditions at Prison No 6 in Nghe An Province, and has staged several hunger strikes to protest inhumane detention conditions.

Dang Dinh Bach was one of a group of **environmental rights defenders** arrested in a government crackdown beginning in 2021. He was Director of the Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Center (LPSD Center, a registered NGO) since 2011, and member of the World Commission on Environmental Law and the Mekong Legal Network. Before his arrest, he was documenting complaints on behalf of people affected by the Son La hydroelectric plant, which displaced more than 91,000 people, most of whom members of ethnic minority groups. All records of his involvement with the Son La victims were taken by the State Security Agency and have not been returned [[A/HRC/WGAD/2023/22](#)].

At the time of his arrest, Bach was also executive board member of the VNGO-EVFTA Network, which advocated for civil society participation in the Viet Nam Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) [[VCHR 7/2021](#); [AL VNM 2/2022](#); [AL VNM 3/2023](#); [A/HRC/WGAD/2023/22](#); [Projet88April2023](#); [VCHR 2021](#)]. Bach's arrest was denounced as arbitrary by the UN, adding to a systemic policy of serious violations:

Mr. Bach was targeted based on his activities related to environmental activism and monitoring of the State's compliance with international and domestic regulations related to environmental law. [...] The present case is one of a number of cases brought before the Working Group in recent years concerning the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of persons, particularly human rights defenders, in Viet Nam. Many of these cases follow a familiar pattern of arrest that does not comply with international norms, lengthy detention pending trial with no access to judicial review, denial of access to legal counsel, incommunicado detention, prosecution under vaguely worded criminal offences for the peaceful exercise of human rights, a brief closed trial at which due process is not observed, disproportionate sentencing and denial of access to the outside world. The Working Group is concerned that this pattern indicates a systemic problem with arbitrary detention in Viet Nam which, if it continues, may amount to a serious violation of international law. [[A/HRC/WGAD/2023/22](#); see also [AL VNM 3/2023](#) and [AL VNM 2/2022](#)]

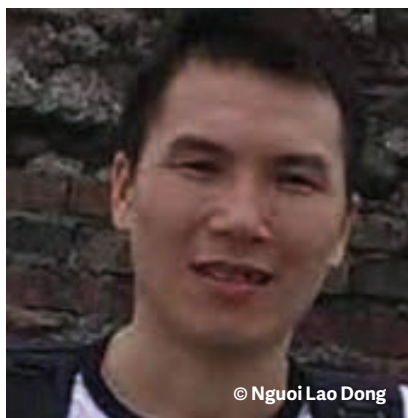
Denouncing a clear attack against civil society, the UN stated:

"It is imperative to stop the use of all punitive measures routinely leveled against human rights and environmental rights advocates in Viet Nam. [...] **Civil society which peacefully advocates for the right to a healthy environment is a fundamental partner in addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and to achieve sustainable development.** [...] The United Nations entities called on all Member States to uphold everyone's **right**

to participate in environmental protection and decision-making and to recognize the importance that environmental advocates play in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. They also called for concrete steps to prevent and stop the use of legislation to hinder or limit unduly the ability of environmental human rights defenders to exercise their work [...]. [OHCHR/UNEP, 22 April 2022]

Other environmental rights defenders detained in the crackdown include **Mai Phan Loi, Bach Hung Duong, Nguy Thi Khanh and Hoang Thi Minh Hong.** They have all been released after paying the allegedly due taxation sums. The UN further observed:

Arrests of environmental human rights defenders are taking place amid Viet Nam's implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership. We reiterate that, **to achieve the goal of a just and sustainable transition to green energy, human rights defenders and environmental organizations must be able to participate freely and actively in shaping climate and environmental policies and decision-making.** [...] These prosecutions and the arbitrary application of restrictive legislation are having a **chilling effect on the critically important work of environmental defenders, and that of other human rights defenders in Viet Nam.** This issue has also been highlighted in the 2023 Secretary General's report on intimidation and reprisals, as well as by UN Human Rights Mechanisms [...]. [OHCHR September 29, 2023]



Do Nam Trung
(sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, expected release: 6 July 2031)

Arrested on 6 July 2021 and sentenced on 16 December 2021 to 10 years in prison and 4 years of probation for **"manufacturing, storing, disseminating or propagating information, material and products aimed at opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He was detained for sharing information and views, particularly on land, the environment, special economic zones, and civic space. After a first 14-month detention in 2014, Trung participated in protests about the Formosa disaster in 2016, bills on cybersecurity, and the establishment of special economic zones in 2018 [HRW 2024; A/HRC/WGAD/2022/86; FLDTrung].

In March 2023, the UN recognised Do Nam Trung's detention as arbitrary, calling for his release and referring the case to the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment [A/HRC/WGAD/2022/86]. The Working Group also recalled the position of UN Special Rapporteurs specifying that Viet Nam's intimidation hinders civil society dialogue with international bodies:

We are deeply concerned at what appears to be a deliberate and systematic attempt to intimidate and silence human rights defenders, civil society organisations, journalists, and political activists through seemingly unfounded legal prosecution, alleged arbitrary detentions and, in some cases, enforced disappearances. [...] It is further reported that the above mentioned cases are part of a wider pattern of judicial persecution of social media activists and human rights defenders in Viet Nam, which is exacerbated when they engage with the UN in the field of human rights. [...] There is concern that this contributes to an environment of fear leading to self-censorship and deterring others from cooperating or sharing

information with the UN. [\[AL VNM 4/2021\]](#)

The Working Group further stated:

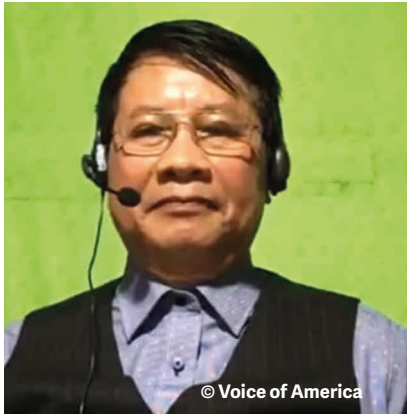
The present case is one of a number of cases brought before the Working Group in recent years concerning the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of persons, particularly human rights defenders, in Viet Nam. Many of these cases follow a **familiar pattern of arrest that does not comply with international norms**, lengthy detention pending trial with no access to judicial review, restricted access to legal counsel, incommunicado detention, prosecution under vaguely worded criminal offences for the peaceful exercise of human rights, disproportionate sentencing and denial of access to the outside world and to medical treatment. The Working Group is concerned that **this pattern indicates a systemic problem with arbitrary detention in Viet Nam which, if it continues, may amount to a serious violation of international law.** [\[A/HRC/WGAD/2022/86 § 53\]](#)



Arrested on 31 August 2021 and sentenced in November 2022 to 8 years in prison for **“making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV”** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Bui Van Thuan participated in demonstrations about Vietnamese sovereignty and the Formosa environmental disaster. He was a member of Brotherhood for Democracy and a core member of Green Trees.

Bui Van Thuan

(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: 30 August 2029)



Tran Quoc Khanh

(sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, expected release: 10 September 2027)

Arrested on 10 March 2021 and sentenced in October 2021 to 6 years and 6 months in prison for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). He used Facebook for years to share news considered sensitive in Viet Nam, such as the trial of farmers in the violent land dispute in the Dong Tam commune. In September 2019, Tran Quoc Khanh applied to the Ministry of the Interior to set up an organisation called the Association for Democracy in Viet Nam, but the Ministry rejected his request. Tran Quoc Khanh also announced that he would run as an independent candidate in the May 2021 national elections, holding several live debates on Facebook with Le Trong Hung, another independent candidate. The two men exchanged views on a number of politically sensitive issues, for which Tran Quoc Khanh was questioned by the police [RFA].



Dinh Van Hai

(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 7 October 2026)

Arrested on 7 October 2021 and sentenced on 28 April 2022 to 5 years in prison for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). A human rights defender and social media campaigner focusing on human rights, land rights and environmental rights, he was detained for posting on social media about socio-economic issues like land confiscation and democracy. He took part in protest marches after the Formosa disaster. In 2018, he joined thousands of people to protest against the draft Special Economic Zones Bill and the problematic Cybersecurity Act. Since 2019, he had been summoned several times by the police and faced harassment, intimidation and even physical assault by local authorities [UNSP AL VNM 6/2022; UNSP AL VNM 4/2021]. The UN stated that the case constituted:

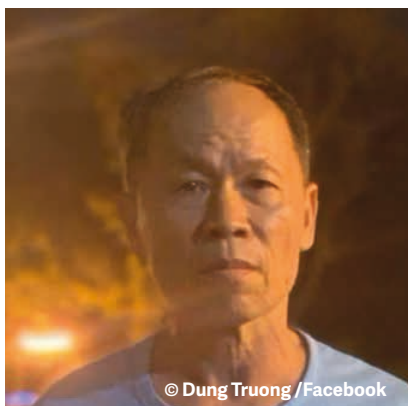
[a] deliberate and systematic attempt to intimidate and silence human rights defenders, [which] [...] contributes to an environment of fear leading to self-censorship and deterring others from cooperating or sharing information with the UN. [AL VNM 4/2021]



Le Manh Ha

(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: 12 January 2030)

Arrested on 12 January 2022 and sentenced on 25 October 2022 to 8 years in prison and 5 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). An active petitioner for land rights, he was detained for sharing views on his YouTube channel [Tieng Dan TV Le Ha](#), established in 2018 and providing a space for farmers and land petitioners to speak about land issues [[Project88](#); [RFAHa](#)]. Once living in the province's Na Hang district, Le Manh Ha and his family were forced to move to the town of Tuyen Quang in 2004 due to the construction of a hydroelectric power station. His family and hundreds of other households claimed they had been unfairly compensated for land lost to the project. They sent petitions to various provincial and central government officials, but their complaints were ignored [[RFAHa](#)].



Truong Van Dung

(sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, expected release: 21 May 2028)

Arrested on 21 May 2022 and sentenced on 28 March 2023 to 6 years in prison for **"conducting propaganda against the State"** (Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code). Truong Van Dung first became active in **land rights advocacy** in the 2000s, campaigning against forced confiscation of his own house. Between 2011 and 2018, Truong Van Dung participated in human rights activities most actively on behalf of victims of land appropriation by Vietnamese authorities. He also participated in numerous protests for Vietnamese sovereignty and environmental protection. He joined a protest opposing Viet Nam's problematic 2018 law on cybersecurity and publicly boycotted Viet Nam's national elections [[HRW 2024](#); [FLD](#)].



Nguyen Lan Thang

(sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, expected release: 5 July 2028)

Arrested on 5 July 2022 and sentenced 6 years in prison and 2 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Nguyen Lan Thang is member of No-U FC Hanoi and has visited sites of forced land confiscation to film the excessive use of force by the authorities. He has also taken part in numerous demonstrations in favour of the environment. He has expressed his support for arbitrarily detained prisoners and is a blogger for the Vietnamese service of Radio Free Asia. For years, the authorities repeatedly harassed, intimidated and persecuted Nguyen Lan Thang. He has been arbitrarily detained, interrogated, placed under house arrest and banned from travelling. On several occasions, plainclothes police officers have assaulted him [[HRW 2024](#)].



Nguyen Son Lo

(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 27 July 2027)

Arrested in July 2022 and sentenced to a total of 5 years in prison, 3 years for **"abusing democratic freedoms"** (Article 331 of the Penal Code) and 2 years for **"abuse of power or position in performance of official duties"** (Article 356 of the Penal Code). Nguyen Son Lo is the former director of the South East and North Asia Institute for Research and Development (SENA), registered and under VUSTA management. In July 2022, VUSTA announced it had decided to suspend SENAs operations and take steps to have it closed down [[FIDH/VCHR](#); [RFA](#); [Project88](#)].



Dang Dang Phuoc
(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: September 8, 2030)

Arrested on 8 September 2022 and sentenced on 6 June 2023 to 8 years in prison and 4 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). A music teacher, Dang Dang Phuoc is detained for sharing information and views on socio-economic issues (e.g. land, environment, mining). He has also spoken out to raise public awareness of economic development projects that have a negative impact on the environment. In May 2016, he signed a statement on the Formosa incident calling for a thorough and transparent investigation, compensation for those who lost their livelihoods as a result of the disaster, and accountability. Dang Dang Phuoc has signed several petitions in favour of democracy. In July 2022, shortly before his arrest, he raised concerns about what he described as "reckless" titanium mining in Thua Thien Hue province [HRW 2024; AL VNM 6/2022; VN 53/VNM.23; The88Project].



Ngo Thi To Nhien
(sentenced to 3.5 years' imprisonment, expected release: March 2027)

Arrested on 15 September 2023, Ngo Thi To Nhien was sentenced on 27 June 2024 to 3.5 years in prison after a secret trial in Hanoi for **"stealing, buying, selling, or destroying the seal or documents of a State agency or organisation"** (Article 342 of the Penal Code). She worked as a high-level consultant on energy projects with the World Bank, the EU, the UN, the Asian Development Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as for the German and Dutch governments. In August 2018, she founded VIETSE, a business organisation and the only independent energy think tank operating in Viet Nam with a mission to accelerate the transition of the Vietnamese energy system. At the time of her arrest, she was **monitoring the implementation plan for Viet Nam's just energy transition partnership (JETP) and the implementation of Viet Nam's commitment to net-zero carbon emission by 2050** [VCHR 3/2024].

Ngo Thi To Nhien was arrested along with Le Quoc Anh and Duong Viet Duc, who worked for the state electricity utility EVN and were hired as consultants by VIETSE. All were charged for allegedly misappropriating government documents and using planning documents from EVN to explore the potential to integrate renewable energy sources into Viet Nam's electricity grid [RFA]. Police raided VIETSE's offices and later forced the organisation to close down. The current situation of Le Quoc Anh and Duong Viet Duc is unknown [Project88Nhienunderstanding].



Nguyen Vu Binh

(sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment, expected release: February 2031)

Arrested on 29 February 2024 and sentenced on 10 September to 7 years in prison and 3 years of probation for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Nguyen Van Binh is a former journalist at the VCP's official "Communist Review" and a former political prisoner. In 2003, he served a 7-year prison sentence after he sent testimony to the U.S. Congress on human rights violations in Viet Nam. He is a prominent human rights defender. From 2015 until his arrest in 2024, he worked as a freelance journalist, writing about corruption, land rights, police brutality, unfair trials, the right to peaceful protest, the economy, education, and the environment [[HRW](#); [RFA](#)].



Hoang Viet Khanh

(sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment, expected release: March 2032)

Arrested in March 2024 for **"making, storing, spreading information, materials and items for the purpose of opposing the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). Hoang Viet Khanh began using Facebook in 2018 to express his views on various socio-political issues in Viet Nam. He has denounced police brutality and expressed concern about confessions extracted under torture in police custody. He has publicly expressed his support for those arbitrarily detained "to intimidate and prevent citizens from exercising freedom of speech".



Arrested on 29 February 2024 and sentenced on 5 August 2024 to 5 years in prison for **"disseminating information, material, articles and publications against the SRV"** (Article 117 of the Penal Code). A leading blogger known by his pen name Anh Chi, he was detained for exchanging views on socio-economic issues. He also founded one of Viet Nam's largest independent civil society groups – No-U -, which has been involved in causes ranging from **independent publishing and environmental protection to land grabs and police accountability** (e.g. the **Dong Tam police raid**). Tuyen has criticised the Vietnamese government's inaction on the environment (including the **Formosa case**) and reported on it [[RFAahnchi](#); [Project88](#)].

Nguyen Chi Tuyen (Anh Chi)
(sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, expected release: 1 March 2029)



Arrested on 24 April 2024, he was charged under Article 337 of the Penal Code, which criminalises the **"deliberate disclosure of classified information; appropriation, trading [and] destruction of classified documents"**. Nguyen Van Binh is Director General of the Legal Affairs Department of the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA). At the time of his arrest, he was leading efforts to ratify ILO Convention 87, which guarantees workers the right to form independent trade unions without prior authorisation. While working for MoLISA, he played a leading role in the proposed enactment of Viet Nam's 2019 Labour Code and the ratification of certain core ILO Conventions. Before his arrest, Binh was preparing the ratification of ILO Convention 87, with technical support from the ILO, for submission to the National Assembly. Among the progressive forces of MoLISA, Binh had engaged extensively with foreign governments and international organisations on labour reform, including its links to trade agreements. Binh was reportedly increasingly isolated within MoLISA after the resignation of powerful allies and reformers in recent years [[Project88Bin](#)]. The official media has not published any information on a possible trial or release at the time of writing.

Nguyen Van Binh
(detained, awaiting trial)



Vu Minh Tien
(detained, awaiting trial)

Arrested in April 2024, Vu Minh Tien was reportedly arrested and charged under Article 337 of the Penal Code which criminalises the **“deliberate disclosure of classified information; appropriation, trading, [and] destruction of classified documents.”** He has not been seen in public since 21 March 2024 when he attended a workshop in Ho Chi Minh City [[Project88](#)]. He is the head of policy and legal affairs at the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and was leading efforts to bring Viet Nam’s labour laws into line with international standards. Tien is also director of the Institute for Workers and Trade Unions (IWTU), member of the Viet Nam Domestic Advisory Group monitoring the implementation of the EVFTA on Viet Nam’s side. The official media has not published any information on his arrest, possible trial or release at the time of writing this report.



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The Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) is a non-profit organisation founded in Paris in 1975. Its President is Penelope Faulkner. VCHR is dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic freedoms in Vietnam. It monitors and reports on human rights violations, campaigns for the release of prisoners of conscience, and mobilises international support for the respect of human rights and the rule of law in Vietnam. VCHR has been a member organisation of FIDH since 1989.

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Viet Nam's crackdown on human rights defenders working on sustainable development:

A non-exhaustive list of defenders and members of civil society organisations who are being arbitrarily detained and must be released immediately.

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