

Members of the United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO) (Hiệp Hội Đoàn Kết Công Nông)

Background:

Under current Vietnamese law, peaceful political dissent is criminalized by the arbitrary application of vaguely-worded national security legislation. This violates freedom of expression and association, in contravention of international human rights instruments to which Vietnam is a state party, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Vietnam hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit on November 18 and 19, 2006, in Ha Noi. Starting around the time of the summit, there was a serious crackdown on peaceful dissent and freedom of expression and association. At least 35 people were arrested between November 2006 and the end of 2007, including lawyers, trade unionists, religious leaders, and internet dissidents.

Tran Quoc Hien, Doan Van Dien, and Doan Huy Chuong are members of the independent United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO) which was formed by dissidents in October 2006. Independent trade unions are not allowed in Vietnam; labor union activities must be arranged under supervision of the ruling Communist Party. The UWFO exists to protect and promote workers' rights, and advocates the right to form and participate in trade unions that are independent of government interference. It also calls for justice for people whose land and property have been unlawfully confiscated by government officials, and for an end to exploitation of cheap labor and dangerous working conditions.

Tran Quoc Hien:



Born c. 1965. Married, with a 12-year-old son.

Tran Quoc Hien, the director of a legal consultancy in Ho Chi Minh city, provided advice to farmers whose land had been confiscated by the authorities. He was selected as the spokesperson for the

UWFO in January 2007. Two days later, on January 12, he was arrested. On May 4, it was reported in official media that he would be brought to trial on May 15 in the Ho Chi Minh City People's Court, charged under Article 88 (conduction propaganda against the state) and Article 89 (disrupting security) of the penal code.

Allegations against Tran Quoc Hien included that he "joined reactionary organizations through the Internet" and that "under the guise of helping members of the public lodge petitions," he and others incited demonstrations and posted "distorted" articles on the Internet. He was also charged with being a member of an internet-based pro-democracy movement, Bloc 8406, formed on 8 April 2006. On that date activists launched a manifesto calling for peaceful political change and respect for human rights.

Amnesty International believes that Tran Quoc Hien was arrested for his activities related to the UWFO, as well as his support of Bloc 8406.

At the trial on May 15, Tran Quoc Hien was sentenced to three years imprisonment under Article 88, two years under Article 89, and two years of house arrest on release. He is currently believed to be detained at Prison Z30A, Phan Trai 2, Xa Xuan Loc, Dong Nai Province. In 2009, Tran Quoc Hien was one of a small number of political prisoners in Z30A prison camp who participated in a hunger strike to protest harsh conditions of detention.

Doan Van Dien:



Born c. 1954. Mennonite pastor, previously arrested for religious activities.

Doan Van Dien was arrested on November 15, 2006. That day he had given an interview to US-based Radio Free Asia, expressing concerns about the arrest of his sons, also UWFO members. He was accused of collecting complaints about land use and sending them to overseas websites and journalists, and distributing anti-government leaflets ahead of the APEC summit.

Doan Van Dien was tried on December 10, 2007 at Dong Nai Provincial People's Court and sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment for "abusing democracy and freedom rights." His appeal was rejected on February 28, 2008. Doan Van Dien is being held in B5 Prison, Dong Nai Province.

Doan Huy Chuong:



Born 1985. Son of Doan Van Dien. Previously detained in 2006 for UWFO activity.

Doan Huy Chuong worked at a seafood company in Quang Nam Province before moving to Ho Chi Minh City, where he led several strikes. In November 2006 he was arrested and charged with “distorting the facts” in interviews with international media, including Radio Free Asia. He had claimed that the Vietnamese government committed labor rights violations and arrested peaceful protesters. He served 18 months in prison for “abusing democratic freedoms.” He suffered mental and physical abuse in prison.

Doan Huy Chuong was arrested again in February 2010 for helping to organize a strike by around 10,000 workers at the My Phong shoe factory in Tra Vinh Province, distributing leaflets, and being in contact with the overseas Committee to Protect Vietnamese Workers. Shortly before the ASEAN summit in Ha Noi beginning October 28, 2010, Doan Huy Chuong was convicted of “disrupting security” under Article 89 of the penal code, and sentenced to seven years in prison. He was sentenced alongside Do Thi Minh Hanh and Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, two other labor organizers.

Doan Huy Chuong is currently being held incommunicado. Amnesty International is concerned that he and other jailed UWFO members are at risk of being subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment while in prison.

Goals of the campaign for these prisoners:

- Secure the immediate and unconditional release of Tran Quoc Hien, Doan Van Dien, and Doan Huy Chuong.
- Ensure that the prisoners have adequate medical care and adequate conditions of detention; ensure that they have access to their families and to lawyers.
- Educate the public about this case, and about the lack of certain human rights in Vietnam, including freedom of expression and freedom of association.
- Have local government officials and other leaders put pressure on the Vietnamese government to resolve this case.

- Have Congressional representatives send a letter to the Ambassador of Vietnam in Washington, calling for the release of the trade unionists.
- Have Congressional representatives introduce, co-sponsor, and/or support a resolution calling for the release of these prisoners.
- Send copies of correspondence to the U.S. Embassy in Ha Noi; the embassy has raised the cases of dissidents in the past and may be able to help.
- Secure the unconditional release of all people in Vietnam detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.
- Ensure that the authorities in Vietnam end harassment, threats and arrest of peaceful dissidents and activists.
- Have the authorities in Vietnam cease using national security legislation to criminalize peaceful dissent, including by repealing or amending relevant provisions of the 1999 Penal Code.

Addresses for letters of solidarity:

Tran Quoc Hien

Prison Z30A
Phan Trai 2
Xa Xuan Loc
Tinh Dong Nai
VIET NAM

Doan Van Dien

B5 Prison
Tinh Dong Nai
VIET NAM

Doan Huy Chuong

[location unknown]

Please note: solidarity letters should be very short. They must NOT mention Amnesty International. Use brief statements of support, such as “I am thinking of you” and “I wish you good health.”

Addresses used for appeals so far:

H. E. Nguyen Quoc Cuong
Ambassador
Embassy of Vietnam
1233 20th Street NW, Suite 400
Washington DC 20036
Fax: 202 861 0917
Salutation: Your Excellency,

Minister of Public Security
Le Hong Anh
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: +8443 942 0223
Salutation: Dear Minister,

Minister of Justice
Ha Hung Cuong
Ministry of Justice
58-60 Tran Phu Street
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: +8443 843 1431
Salutation: Dear Minister,

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Pham Gia Khiem
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: +8443 823 1872
Salutation: Dear Minister,

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung
Government Office
1 Hoang Hoa Tham Street
Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: +8443 804 4130
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister,

President Nguyen Minh Triet
Office of the President
35 Ngo Quyen
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Salutation: Dear President,

Truong Vinh Trong
Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the
Amnesty Advisory Council
Prime Minister's Office
1 Hoang Hoa Tham Street
Ba Dinh district, Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

Chairman of the Viet Nam Lawyers Association
Pham Quoc Anh
Viet Nam Lawyers Association
A2 261 Thuy Khue
Ha Noi
VIET NAM
Fax: +844 947 4831
Salutation: Dear Sir,

Ambassador Virginia E. Palmer
American Embassy, Hanoi
PSC 461, Box 400, FPO AP 96521-0002
Fax: +844 850 5010

Summary of campaign work so far:

Amnesty International Group 39 estimates having sent over 300 letters of appeal on behalf of imprisoned UWFO members since taking on this case dossier in 2009. We estimate having sent over 200 messages directly to the prisoners. We have distributed over 200 copies of a petition on this case to other Amnesty International groups around the United States for them to fill out in their communities and send to the authorities in Vietnam.

Sources:

Not Yet a Workers' Paradise: Vietnam's Suppression of the Independent Workers' Movement,
Human Rights Watch, 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/node/82862>

Amnesty International case dossier and email updates (not public material)

Amnesty International updates:

1. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/heavy-sentences-viet-nam-labour-activists-condemned-2010-10-27>
2. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA41/001/2010/en>
3. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/free-imprisoned-trade-unionists>