

URGENT ACTION

ONGOING PUNISHMENT FOR PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Human rights defender Trần Thị Nga is being punished by prison authorities, for ‘not following prison principles’, without any reason being provided. Prohibited from seeing her family, and only allowed one heavily restricted phone call per month, there are grave concerns for her well-being. Detained since January 2017, Tran Thi Nga is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Prison authorities have recently told **Trần Thị Nga’s** family that she is being punished for “not following prison principles”. No documentation has been provided to explain what Tran Thi Nga has been accused of doing. As a result, all visitation rights have been suspended since 28 July 2018 and she has only been permitted to make three phone calls in the past three months to her brother. Each conversation is restricted to five minutes and she is forbidden from discussing anything about herself or the prison conditions. Without any direct confirmation that Tran Thi Nga is in good health, her family remain deeply concerned about her well-being and safety, especially following being beaten up by inmates and their death threats received earlier this year.

Trần Thị Nga, also known by her nickname “Thúy Nga”, was arrested and accused of “conducting propaganda against the state” in January 2017, after her involvement in peaceful protests following the 2016 Formosa environmental disaster. On 25 July 2017, the court of Ha Nam, a province of northern Viet Nam, convicted and sentenced her to nine years in prison and five years of house arrest.

In February 2018, Trần Thị Nga was moved to Gia Trung prison, located 1300 kilometres away from her home, a common tactic by Vietnamese authorities to further punish prisoners of conscience. Despite the logistical difficulties in getting to the prison, Tran Thi Nga’s husband has said that he will try again to visit the prison next month to demand an update about her situation.

Trần Thị Nga is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Please write immediately in Vietnamese, English or your own language, calling Viet Nam’s authorities to:

- Release Trần Thị Nga immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- Ensure that pending her release, she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and all allegations are effectively investigated impartially and independently and those responsible are brought to account;
- End prison transfers as a punitive measure and ensure that Trần Thị Nga has regular access to her family and lawyer of her choice, as well as to the adequate medical care she may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 DECEMBER 2018 TO:

State president

Nguyễn Phú Trọng
2 Hùng Vương, Ba Đình,
Hà Nội, Việt Nam.
Fax: +844 3733 5256
Email: webmaster@president.gov.vn

Salutation: Your Excellency

Prison director

Nguyễn Đình Ba
Trung tâm Ayon,
Trại giam Gia Trung,
Thị trấn Mang Yang, tỉnh Gia Lai,
Việt Nam.

Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Minister of Public Security

Tô Lâm 44 Yết Kiêu St.
Hoàn Kiếm District,
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Fax: +844 382 318 72 c/o Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
Email: ttl.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR THAO VAN NGUYEN, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 12-14 Victoria Road W8 5RD, 020 7937 1912, Fax 020 7565 3853, officeldn@vietnamembassy.org.uk, www.vietnamembassy.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 155/18. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/8965/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trần Thị Nga began her human rights activism by advocating against human trafficking as she was a victim of trafficking herself. She has since worked on a broad range of issues. During her years of activism, Trần Thị Nga has faced several threats and attacks, including being brutally attacked by plain-clothes police. In May 2014, an assault by plain-clothes police left her with a broken arm and leg.

Trần Thị Nga told her husband that she has recently been beaten up and has faced death threats by other inmates during a five-minute conversation on 17 August 2018. She further told her family in July that she was being held in the same prison cell as a prisoner notorious for helping prison guards intimidate and beat-up other prisoners. Her husband has shared his grave concern for her safety as their connection was abruptly cut off when she tried to report her condition in prison. Her final words to him were "I have been often beaten and they recently threatened to kill me".

In 2016, an environmental disaster – often referred to as the Formosa Disaster - in which industrial waste was dumped into the waters in the central coast of Vietnam led to massive protests around the country. A Taiwanese owned factory later admitted being responsible for the incident. The disaster killed hundreds of thousands of tons of fish and left millions of people unemployed. People across the country spoke out in anger, and people in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city took to the streets in 2017 to protest the lack of an adequate response by the Vietnamese government. Many people were beaten up by the police and detained during the protests. In the months after the protests, the authorities arrested many activists. Around 40 people have been arrested in connection with the protests, and at least a dozen activists have fled the country and are seeking asylum in Thailand.

As a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Viet Nam has an obligation to protect everyone from torture and other ill-treatment, and conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into such allegations. The prison conditions in Viet Nam are known to be harsh, with food, healthcare and other conditions falling short of the minimum requirements set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and other international standards. Prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam are often held for lengthy periods in solitary confinement as an additional punishment, in clear violation of these Rules - some former prisoners have said this is like a "prison within prison". For more information please refer to "Prisons within Prisons: Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam" (ASA41/4187/2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA4141872016ENGLISH.PDF>).

Trần Thị Nga is one of 94 known prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam included in the list released by Amnesty International in April 2018. Viet Nam is one of the most prolific jailers of peaceful activists in Southeast Asia, where prison conditions are harsh especially for prisoners detained for political reasons. For more information please refer to "Prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam" (ASA 41/8162/2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/8162/2018/en/>).

Torture and other ill-treatment, including incommunicado detention, prolonged solitary confinement, beatings and deliberately withholding medical treatment are absolutely prohibited under international human rights law but remain common practices by Viet Nam authorities.

Name: Trần Thị Nga
Gender m/f: F

Further information on UA: 155/18 Index: ASA 41/9291/2018 Issue Date: 25 October 2018