

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ATTACKED IN PRISON

Aquatic engineer Nguyen Ngoc Anh, who was sentenced to six years in prison for peacefully expressing his disagreement with government policies, has been physically assaulted in prison by a fellow prisoner. Despite serious injuries to his leg and head, he has been denied access to any medical care, and has instead been locked in solitary confinement. The recent incident follows months of mental abuse from several prisoners, including daily death threats, which the prison officials failed to act on, despite being aware of the abuse.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Director of Ben Tre Provincial Police Force, Vo Hung Minh

404D Đồng Văn Cống, Phường 7,
TP. Bến Tre, Bến Tre,
Vietnam.

Email: conganbentre@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Vo Hung Minh,

I am writing to express my grave concern about the continuing imprisonment and treatment of prisoner of conscience, **Nguyen Ngoc Anh**, who was arrested on 30 August 2018 after he used Facebook to criticise a draft law aimed at establishing special economic zones in the country.

Currently held at Ben Tre detention centre, Nguyen Ngoc Anh has reported being routinely subjected to mental abuse by other prisoners, including daily death threats. During her latest monthly visit, Nguyen Ngoc Anh told his wife that his cellmate had physically assaulted him, leaving him bloody and unconscious. Disturbingly, prison authorities have failed to discipline the aggressor and have yet to acknowledge the formal complaint lodged by Nguyen Ngoc Anh about the incident. Instead, Nguyen Ngoc Anh was then sent to a separated cell and denied all access to medical treatment.

Convicted and sentenced to six years in prison in June 2019, after being convicted of “conducting propaganda against the state”, Nguyen Ngoc Anh has been imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing his opinions.

I therefore urge you, Mr. Vo Hung Minh, to:

- **Ensure that Nguyen Ngoc Anh is released immediately and unconditionally;**
- **Pending release, grant Nguyen Ngoc Anh prompt, regular and unrestricted access to adequate medical care on request or as necessary;**
- **Ensure that pending release, Nguyen Ngoc Anh is treated in full accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), and specifically does not subject him to torture or other ill-treatment, including poor conditions of detention and prolonged solitary confinement.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nguyen Ngoc Anh is a 39-year-old aquatic engineer living in Ben Tre province – a coastal province in southern Vietnam – with his wife and a four-year-old son.

In September 2019, Nguyen Ngoc Anh told his wife, Nguyen Thi Chau, during her monthly visit that he was being constantly mentally abused by his cellmate, including daily death threats. Nguyen Ngoc Anh suspects that this prisoner met a prison guard every Friday, to report on any developments concerning him. It is not uncommon for prison guards to use prisoners to report on, intimidate and harass other prisoners.

On 11 October 2019, when Nguyen Ngoc Anh's wife went to visit him again, she was alarmed to see her husband walking with one leg dragging on the floor, a bruise on his neck, and unable to move his left arm normally. Nguyen Ngoc Anh told her that he had been attacked by his cellmate. One day in mid-September, when Nguyen Ngoc Anh was preparing to take a shower, the prisoner kicked him from behind with such force that Anh's head bumped on the wall and he fainted. The prisoner then proceeded to twist Nguyen Ngoc Anh's left hand and punch him in his head, stopping only when other prisoners intervened.

While Nguyen Ngoc Anh was moved to a separate cell after the incident, he has not received any acknowledgment from the prison guards about the complaint he filed on the incident. In addition, despite his serious injury, the prison authorities rejected his request to receive access to medical care. Rule one of the Nelson Mandela Rules states unequivocally that, "The safety and security of prisoners, staff, service providers and visitors shall be ensured at all times".

Nguyen Ngoc Anh had used his personal Facebook account to express his opinion on different issues in Vietnam, including the Formosa environmental disaster in 2016. In 2018, he actively engaged in an online debate regarding the proposed draft law on establishing three special economic zones in the country. In response, Nguyen Ngoc Anh was arrested on 30 August 2018 by the local authorities of Ben Tre province and charged under article 117 of the penal code, for "conducting propaganda against the state". Detained without trial until June 2019, he was eventually convicted and sentenced to six years in prison on 6 June 2019.

Currently, there are more than a hundred prisoners of conscience in Vietnam, many of whom have suffered torture and other ill-treatment behind bars – including harassment, threats, intimidation and physical assault. Conditions of detention are harsh; Amnesty International often receives news and reports from families of prisoners of conscience complaining of the poor diet, lack of healthcare, and inadequate clothing during winter time.

Vietnam is a state party to the International Covenant of Political and Civil Rights, and the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam also guarantees the right to freedom of expression for all citizens. It is also a state party to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Vietnamese government is obliged to respect and protect the right of every individual under its jurisdiction, and to protect the safety and wellbeing of those who are in its custody, in particular.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Vietnamese/English
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 November 2019
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Nguyen Ngoc Anh (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: 12-14 Victoria Rd, Kensington, London W8 5RD