

11 October 2016

Vietnam – Arrest of blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh

On 10 October 2016, blogger and human rights defender Ms **Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh** was arrested by authorities in Khanh Hoa province. She was charged under Article 88 of the Penal Code with ‘conducting anti-state propaganda’ and is being held in a detention centre in Nha Trang city.

[Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh](#) is a blogger and the Coordinator of the **Vietnamese Bloggers Network**. Since 2006, she has been blogging under the pseudonym of Me Nam (Mother Mushroom). She is known for openly condemning human rights violations committed by Vietnamese authorities, including revealing corruption cases. As a result, she has repeatedly been targeted, including being arrested and physically attacked by unidentified men and police officers. In July 2015, Front Line Defenders issued an [Urgent Appeal](#) following her detention and assault at a police station in Nha Trang.

At around 10am on 10 October, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh was arrested as she accompanied the mother of a jailed man to the detention centre in which her son is being held. Following her arrest, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh was brought to her residence where police carried out a search.

After the search, police officials reportedly stated that they had found in her possession two sets of ‘anti-government material’. The first was a cardboard sign calling for the prosecution of the Formosa Ha Tinh Steel company, a Taiwanese-owned steel plant in Ha Tinh province which illegally discharged toxic waste into the sea off the Vietnamese coast in April 2016. This discharge of chemical waste resulted in large-scale water pollution and the deaths of millions of fish and other sea-life, seriously impacting the livelihoods of thousands of Vietnamese fishermen.

Since the environmental disaster, large numbers of Vietnamese citizens have protested on a regular basis demanding that Formosa Ha Tinh Steel be held accountable. A number of online campaigns have also been initiated. The second piece of ‘evidence’ pointing to ‘anti-government propaganda’ was Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh’s possession of an open letter, issued in the name of the Vietnamese Blogger Network, which also demanded accountability for the incident.

Police have reportedly announced that they will detain the human rights defender for four months as they carry out an investigation into her activities. If found guilty of ‘conducting anti-state propaganda’, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh could face a maximum penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

Front Line Defenders is concerned with the arrest and detention of the blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, which it believes is directly related to her peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders sees this as part of a pattern of ongoing judicial harassment using Article 88 of the Penal Code against human rights defenders who have highlighted abuses in Vietnam.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, and drop all charges against her, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, while in detention, adheres to all those conditions set out in the 'Basic Principles for Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/111 of 14 December 1990';
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security and integrity of Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Vietnam are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment;