

1 March 2017

Vietnam - Beating of Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton and friend

On 27 February 2017, human rights defender **Nguyen Trung Ton** and a friend, Nguyen Viet Tu, were kidnapped and assaulted by men in plainclothes in the provinces of Quang Binh and Ha Tinh.

[Nguyen Trung Ton](#) is a human rights defender and protestant pastor who advocates for democracy and freedom of religion in Vietnam. He is also president of **Brotherhood of Democracy**, an independent civil society organisation which uses the internet to promote human rights and coordinate the efforts of various pro-democracy actors in the country. In December 2011 Nguyen Trung Ton was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and two years' probation on charges of 'anti-state propaganda' under Article 88 of the Penal Code, a charge which is frequently used to imprison human rights defenders in Vietnam. The co-founder of Brotherhood of Democracy, **Nguyen Van Dai**, has been in [custody](#) on such a charge since December 2015.

On 27 February 2017 Nguyen Trung Ton and Nguyen Viet Tu travelled to Ba Don town in Quang Binh province to meet with local activists there. On their arrival in the town at around 9.30pm, their car was stopped by at least six men in plainclothes, whom they believe were police officers. The two men were removed from their car, forced into another car and driven to Ha Linh commune in the neighbouring Ha Tinh province. There, they were reportedly brought to a remote area and Nguyen Trung Ton was badly beaten about the legs and feet with an iron bar. The two men were robbed of all their possessions, including their clothes, before being left alone with no means of transportation. They were found injured the following morning at around 2am by local residents who helped them to travel back to Nguyen Trung Ton's home province of Thanh Hoa.

Physical assaults against human rights defenders by plainclothes assailants have become a [common occurrence](#) in the past number of years as a means to dissuade them from doing their work. Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned by these attacks and believes they are motivated solely by the victims' work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assault against Nguyen Trung Ton and Nguyen Viet Tu, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Nguyen Trung Ton;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Vietnam are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.