

8 October 2020

Vietnam: Woman human rights defender Pham Doan Trang arrested, charged and held in undisclosed location

On 6 October 2020, woman human rights defender **Pham Doan Trang** was arrested from her apartment in Ho Chi Minh City. Authorities immediately charged her with “making, storing, disseminating or propagandising information, materials and products that aim to oppose the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” under article 117 of the Penal Code, under which she could face up to 20 years in prison.

[Pham Doan Trang](#) is a woman human rights defender, blogger and journalist. She is the founder of online law and human rights magazine Luật Khoa, and is a member of the editorial board of The Vietnamese, an independent news website which raises public awareness about human rights and political issues in Vietnam. She recently published “Politics for All”, a book promoting citizen participation, and authored a book in 2008 on the Vietnam’s LGBTI community’s demands for equal rights .

On 6 October 2020, at around 23.30pm, Ho Chi Minh city police, Hanoi police and Ministry of Public Security (MPS) officials jointly raided Pham Doan Trang’s rented apartment in Ho Chi Minh. After presenting her with an arrest warrant they brought her to an undisclosed location in Ho Chi Minh where she was not allowed contact her family or lawyers. Authorities also detained her landlord who was released later in the morning of 7 October 2020. Pham’s arrest took place just a few hours after the 2020 US-Vietnam Annual Human Rights Dialogue. The woman defender has since been transferred to Hanoi, where she continues to be held incommunicado in an undisclosed location.

Pham Doan Trang is an outspoken blogger and journalist and has always demonstrated solidarity with her fellow human rights defenders, organising protests, attending trials or campaigning for their release. At great personal risk, she periodically visited families of imprisoned defenders to provide them with support and assistance. In anticipation of her imprisonment, in May 2019 the Pham Doan Trang wrote a detailed note urging her fellow human rights defenders not to prioritise her release and to focus instead on other detained defenders and democratic reform in Vietnam. Pham Doan Trang has recently published the 3rd edition of the Dong Tam report which she wrote with another human rights defender. The report analyses the bloody attack carried out by Vietnam’s security forces in the Dong Tam commune in January 2020. Human rights defenders [Can Thi Theu](#) and her sons, **Trinh Ba Phuong** and **Trinh Ba Tu** helped co-author the first and second editions of the report. All three were arrested on 24 June 2020 and have been charged with “conducting anti-state propaganda”. They remain in detention awaiting trial.

Pham Doan Trang has come under frequent harassment, persecution, and physical assault by Vietnamese authorities in recent years. She walks with a pronounced and permanent limp caused by an injury she suffered when attacked by security forces during an environmental protest in Hanoi in April 2015. More recently, she was [arrested](#) in November 2017 after meeting the EU delegation in Hanoi and was again detained and [beaten](#) in August 2018.

It is deeply concerned that Pham Doan Trang may face a heavy prison sentence for exercising her legitimate right to freedom of expression. Front Line Defenders believes that the woman human rights defender is being targeted solely for her peaceful work in defence of human rights in Vietnam.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Pham Doan Trang and drop the charges against her, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Grant Pham Doan Trang immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyers.
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 including police and judicial harassment.