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Vietnam: Woman human rights defender Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh arrested

On 7 April 2021, police officers in Hanoi city arrested woman human rights defender **Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh** under Article 117 of the Criminal Code, which relates to conducting anti-state propaganda. Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh has been the target of judicial harassment since 2016 and arbitrarily detained multiple times for her human rights activities. The woman human rights defender is currently being detained at Prison Camp 2 in Thuong Tin district.

[Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh](#) is a woman human rights defender and an active advocate for Vietnam's prisoners of conscience, as well as victims of land appropriation. She frequently visits the families of prisoners of conscience and accompanies them to the detention facilities, and until recently assisted in the collection of funds for their support through the '50K Fund' that she set up for this purpose in 2018. She was forced to shut down the fund just a few months ago, under mounting pressure from the authorities. The woman human rights defender is also active on social media, where she regularly voices her opinions on human rights issues in the country.

On 7 April 2021, a group of about 30 police officers arrested woman human rights defender Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh at her home in Hanoi and cordoned off her apartment. She was taken to the Hanoi police department's Security Investigation Agency and then later moved to Prison Camp 2 in Thuong Tin district. The defender was arrested on charges under Article 117 of the Criminal Code for "making, storing, or spreading information, materials or items for the purpose of opposing the State of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam", a charge that could carry a potential prison sentence of up to 20 years. Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh has requested the prison authorities grant her access to a lawyer, however the authorities have not responded to the request and so the woman human rights defender is yet to meet any lawyer or family member.

Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh has come under frequent judicial harassment and persecution by Vietnamese authorities in the past several years for her human rights work. Following her efforts to raise funds for the family of a community leader who was killed in a police raid in Dong Tam village in January 2020, Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh's bank accounts were frozen, upon the instruction of the police. In March 2018, following her participation in a peaceful protest against the Law on Cybersecurity and the Law on Special Economic Zones, the woman human rights defender was [arrested](#) and severely beaten during the interrogation, which resulted in injuries to her face.

The woman human rights defender's arrest comes after the recent [sentencing](#) of four other human rights defenders, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, Le Huu Minh Tuan, Pham Chi Dung and woman human rights defender [Đinh Thị Thu Thủy](#), under the same charges under Article 117 of the Penal Code. On 14 January 2020, UN experts [condemned](#) the recent arrests in Vietnam and the dangerous and blatant usage of Article 117 of the Penal Code to silence critical voices and further restrict the right to freedom of expression in the country.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest of woman human rights defender Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh and is seriously concerned by the shrinking space for freely exercising the right to freedom of expression in Vietnam without fear of consequence or retaliation, and the ongoing judicial harassment of human rights defenders. Front Line Defenders believes that Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh, like other human rights defenders recently arrested, 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 Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh, 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 Nguyễn Thúy Hạnh immediate and unfettered access to her family and lawyers and ensure her physical and psychological integrity whilst detained;
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.