

10 July 2018

Vietnam: Labour rights activist Do Thi Minh Hanh blockaded in home, subject to daily violent attacks

From 24 June to 4 July 2018, labour rights activist **Do Thi Minh Hanh** was subject to daily attacks. Unidentified aggressors intimidated the defender, seriously injured her colleagues, and pelted her father's house with rocks and incendiary devices, shattering windows and breaking furniture. Local police repeatedly failed to respond to calls for help or investigate the issue.

[Do Thi Minh Hanh](#) is the President of the unsanctioned organisation Viet Labor Movement. In 2006, Do Thi Minh Hanh co-founded the United Workers Farmers Organisation (UWFO), an independent union formed to promote better pay and adequate workplace safety. Due to her activism and support of Vietnamese labour unions, the defender was found guilty in October 2010 of “disrupting national security” and sentenced to seven years’ incarceration. She was released on 26 June 2014, after serving four years and four months of her seven year sentence. Since her release, Do Thi Minh Hanh has been a regular target of harassment by Vietnamese authorities.

On 15 May 2018, Vietnamese authorities prevented Do Thi Minh Hanh from travelling to visit her mother and sister in Austria. Authorities in Ho Chi Minh city had also recently interfered with the defender's attempts to rent an apartment in the city. Unable to leave Vietnam or find accommodation in Ho Chi Minh, the defender went to stay with her father in her hometown of Di Linh, in Lam Dong Province. Beginning on 9 June 2018, strangers began appearing outside the house, frequently in masks, and observing Do Thi Minh Hanh and her father. The defender later learned that an adjacent home had been rented by some of these individuals.

On the evening of 24 June, while the defender was returning home from her brother's house nearby, two masked men aggressively pursued her. That evening, masked individuals began throwing rocks at Do Thi Minh Hanh's father's house. The defender placed multiple calls to local police, who promised to visit the scene but never arrived. Police also failed to respond to a report submitted the following day by the head of the neighbourhood security department.

On 26 June, at 11 p.m., the house was again subjected to attack. In addition to rocks, masked individuals also threw a lit object resembling an incendiary device, complete with wicks and a gasoline-soaked paper exterior, into the home, but fortunately the fire extinguished before the device could properly ignite. This assault continued until 1 a.m. the next morning. The defender's calls to Di Linh District and Lam Dong Province police went unanswered.

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On 27 June, two friends of the defender visited her in her father's house. Upon their return home, both were attacked by unidentified men. One of the friends, beaten with wooden clubs and steel bars, suffered broken ribs, a broken shoulder, and three broken bones in his hand.

Two more attacks occurred on the evenings of 30 June and 2 July, during which time unidentified assailants cut electricity to the defender's residence and again showered the house with stones and other detritus, breaking windows and terrorising Do Thi Minh Hanh and her father. Local police again took no action.

Supporters have suggested that these actions aim to force the defender to move out of the province.

Front Line Defenders believes that these attacks were committed with the endorsement of the local Vietnamese authorities in an attempt to discourage Do Thi Minh Hanh from continuing her peaceful human rights work supporting Vietnamese labourers.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Investigate the violent attacks against Do Thi Minh Hanh, her father, and her colleagues;
2. Guarantee the safety and well-being of Do Thi Minh Hanh;
3. Remove the travel ban placed on Do Thi Minh Hanh;
4. 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.