

15 November 2019

## **Vietnam: Arbitrary detention and confiscation of passport of Dinh Thao**

On 15 November 2019, at 9:30am, woman human rights defender **Dinh Thao** was briefly detained at the Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi. She had just landed in Vietnam after nearly four years spent engaging in capacity building and advocating for the protection of human rights in Vietnam in several countries around the world.

[Dinh Thao](#) is a medical practitioner by profession but started her human rights work in 2015 protesting against a tree-felling project in Hanoi. Following this, she engaged in numerous pro-democracy and rights-based activities, including organising public events to advocate for environmental issues and supporting victims of police brutality and wrongful death penalties convictions. Dinh Thao has also been an active voice in speaking out against human rights violations in Vietnam at the international level, including at the UN Human Rights Council, the EU Parliament, Commission and Council.

On 15 November 2019, Dinh Thao flew from Bangkok to Hanoi, after nearly four years working abroad advocating for the protection of human rights in Vietnam. On arrival at the airport she was detained and taken for interrogation by a group of ten security officials. While in detention, she was denied access to her family or her lawyer. The woman human rights defender was released that same day but her passport was confiscated. The Vietnamese authorities routinely punish recently returned human rights defenders by subjecting them to *de facto* travel bans through the confiscation of their passports.

Dinh Thao has previously been targeted for her peaceful work in defence of human rights. In April 2015 she was arrested for taking part in a series of protests against the Hanoi authority's tree-felling project that saw the cutting down of over 6700 trees. Dinh Thao's work as an advocate for human rights in Vietnam has won her international recognition which has seen her speak at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and several other platforms.

Front Line Defenders condemns the confiscation of Dinh Thao's passport and is deeply concerned by the harassment of the woman human rights defender. Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Vietnam to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally remove all restrictions on the free movement of Dinh Thao and cease all further forms of harassment against her, as it is believed that these measures are not only solely related to her legitimate human rights activities but, furthermore, constitute a direct transgression of the rights of Dinh Thao;
2. 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.