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## **Vietnam: Nguyễn Bắc Truyển's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức's health deteriorates as they continue their hunger strike**

**Nguyễn Bắc Truyển's** and **Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức's** health has severely deteriorated after both human rights defenders have spent over a week on hunger strike. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển has been on hunger strike to protest mistreatment by the prison authorities in violation of Vietnam's 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments. Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức has been on hunger strike to demand that his sixteen-year prison sentence be reduced in line with the Penal Code of 2015, which was introduced after he was sentenced in January 2010.

[Nguyễn Bắc Truyển](#) is a legal expert who promotes freedom of belief in the Mekong Delta region and is Head of the Vietnamese Political & Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, an organization for former prisoners of conscience. He has also provided free legal assistance to victims of land grabs, campaigned for multi-party democracy and called on the Vietnamese government to release all political prisoners. Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức is a human rights defender who advocates for the rights of defenders. He is also an entrepreneur and blogger who, through his writing, raised the social, political and economic issues prevalent in Vietnam. He also founded the Chan Research Group to study the economy, politics, and society of Vietnam and other countries in the region.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyển's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức's health has been rapidly deteriorating since they began their hunger strike over a week ago. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển began his strike to protest the authorities mistreatment of him and fellow prisoners at the An Đầm prison. Letters written to him have constantly been intercepted by authorities and he has not been given access to them. The defender has not received any medical check ups or treatment in spite of several requests for various ailments, including joint pains. Nguyễn Bắc Truyển has been protesting the several violations of Vietnam's 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments, which maintains under Article 27, an entire provision on the rights and obligations of prisoners, which guarantees, among many things, healthcare, access to letters, expression of religious belief and right to lodge complaints. He has been in prison for over three years since he was [arrested](#) on 30 July 2017 for allegedly taking part in anti-state activities.

Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức has been on strike to demand that the High Court review the sixteen year sentence handed down to him in 2010, so as to adhere to the changes in the Penal code of 2015, which carries a maximum sentence of five years for the charges against him. The defender is currently serving the eleventh year of his sentence after he was arrested on 29 May 2009 and held in pre-trial detention, until he was formally charged under Article 79 for subversion in January 2010. In the years since his arrest, Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức has faced several hardships in prison, including limited access to his family and subsequently being transferred to a prison far from his family, with no justified reason given for the transfer. While in prison, he has led various hunger strikes and has continued defending the rights of fellow prisoners. He is currently at the Thanh Chuong detention camp in Nghe An province. When he was visited by family last week, he passed on a note to them saying, "You must continue our struggle for human rights and use my death as inspiration to push our struggle forward through the end of this year and into the next".

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the continued incarceration and declining health of human rights defenders Nguyễn Bắc Truyển's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, as it believes that their imprisonment and ill-treatment is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defending human rights.

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

1. Immediately provide Nguyễn Bắc Truyền's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức with the required medical attention;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Nguyễn Bắc Truyền's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức and drop all charges against them, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Nguyễn Bắc Truyền's and Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, while in detention, adheres to Vietnam's 2019 Law on Execution of Criminal Judgments, and the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
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.