

TWO YEARS WITH EVFTA AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

EU Parliament, Brussels 28-02-2023

Speeches from the meeting

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TWO YEARS WITH EVFTA AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN VIETNAM



Tuesday 28 February



11h15 - 13h15



Room 3H1

Two years with EVFTA and Human rights in Vietnam

We are pleased to invite you to a discussion on Tuesday 28th February from 11h15 - 13h15 in room 3H1. Online participation will be available upon request.

The EVFTA aims to strengthen human rights, freedom of assembly and labor rights in Vietnam and give Vietnam frictionless trade access to Europe. The event will discuss the state of play of the EVFTA and seek to answer the important question: What is really happening two years after the entry into force of the trade agreement?

Members of international and Vietnamese human rights NGOs such as Reporters Without Borders, The Swiss-Vietnam Committee (COSUNAM), Viet Tan and Vietnam Worker Defenders will present their assessment of the EVFTA.

A light lunch will be served following the meeting (from 12h40 to 13h15).

Agenda

- 11h15: Welcome (MEP Marianne Vind, Vice-Chair, European Parliament ASEAN-delegation)
- 11h20: Introduction
- 11h22: Human Rights in Vietnam anno 2022
- 11h30: Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in Vietnam (Testimony)
- 11h45: Speech from an NGO Media
- 11h50: Independent trade union in Vietnam according to EVFTA (Vietnam Worker Defenders)
- 12h05: Speech from an NGO Human Rights
- 12h10: Civic Space in Vietnam/Recommendations (MEP Saskia Bricmont)
- 12h20: Discussion
- 12h40: Light Lunch
- 13h15: The end

Welcome, MEP Marianne Vind

MEP Marianne Vind has many years of experience working within trade union, and especially work environment before being elected as an MEP. Her interest in EVFTA is supporting the workers' rights in Vietnam.

Welcome

Thank you for coming. I am happy to see all of you gathered in the European Parliament today.

I have been looking forward to this event.

It has been more than two years since the EU and Vietnam signed a free trade agreement.

The largest free trade agreement between the EU and a developing country.

An ambitious and optimistic free trade agreement that should also increase prosperity in Vietnam by creating growth and jobs.

I know how important trade agreements are for the trading partner countries and their workers.

Today, modern trade agreements are concerned about more than just trade.

I am from Denmark in Scandinavia - where the Vikings went from fighting to trading many years ago.

And this is exactly what trade agreements should be able to do: Create peace and prosperity for both parties.

Today's modern trade agreements should go far beyond dealing with traditional trade issues to include democratic principles, human rights, climate aspects and labor rights.

Just to name a few.

The European Union–Vietnam Free Trade Agreement aims to strengthen human rights, freedom of assembly and labor rights in Vietnam.

Our agreement contains specific requirements to support sustainable development for both parties.

Supporting economic growth, social development and environmental protection are three basic elements for achieving sustainable development.

Trade policies have wide-ranging effects on the economy, employment, labour standards, social cohesion and the environment.

In the EU, we want to ensure that our trade policy supports sustainable development within the EU, in our partner countries and globally.

Today, we will take stock of what is really happening two years after the trade agreement entered into force.

In some aspects, it is going well. In other areas, we could do better.

One thing is certain.

It means a lot for the people of Vietnam that the requirements in our agreement are met.

Vietnamese workers, for example, are dependent on requirements for a proper working environment.

This is just one of the many aspects of our EU-Vietnam agreement that we will have the chance to discuss today.

I look forward to listening to you and to having a good discussion on this topic.

Before introducing today's speakers, I would like to thank Helena Huong Nguyen for her great work on arranging this event. Thank you.

Human Rights in Vietnam anno 2022, Viet Tan

Michel Tran Duc, Viet Tan

Michel Tran Duc is the advocacy director for Viet Tan, a pro-democracy group unauthorized in Vietnam. With members in Vietnam and around the world, Viet Tan aims to establish democracy and reform Vietnam through peaceful means. Besides his volunteer work for Viet Tan, Michel is an IT project manager based in Paris, France.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Marianne Vind, for organizing this meeting in the European Parliament. Thank you for giving the opportunity to all of us to highlight the human rights and the labor rights situation in Vietnam.

In 2019 and 2020, Vietnamese and International NGOS, including Viet Tan, The Vietnam Association of Independent Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, Cosunam, and many others, alerted the European Parliament on the continuous increase of violations on human rights in Vietnam.

At that time, we urged MEP not to approve the ratification of the EVFTA unless the Vietnamese authorities accept some requirements:

1. release all political prisoners,
2. repeal some articles in the Criminal code which are used to imprison peaceful dissents such as article 117,
3. revise the cyber-security law which is used to muzzle the online freedom of expression,
4. respect the freedom of religion.
5. authorize independent labor union and ratify ILO conventions No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize) and No. 105 (Abolition of Forced Labour)
6. accept the visit of all UN Special Procedures
7. suspend all the executions and abolish the death penalty.

Despite the efforts of a significant number of MEP to relay these requirements, including Ms. Marianne Vind and Saskia Bricmont, unfortunately, a majority of MEP approved the free-trade agreement. And unfortunately, 4 years later, these requests are still relevant. We can even say that these requests are even more necessary than ever.

I invite you to watch a short video summarizing that situation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dVkgCjrF34>

Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in Vietnam, Testimony from Vietnam

The speaker is a young man who is currently living in Vietnam, and the son of a prisoner of conscience. He has covered his face during the testimony and prefers to remain anonymous due to continue working and supporting the voices of freedom in Vietnam. The organizer and host know his identity.

Ladies and gentlemen, honorable representatives and all the guests in the meeting,

I am a concerned citizen of Vietnam who is here today to share with you my view on the state of freedom of expression and media in Vietnam after the implementation of the EVFTA started to roll out.

Sir and Madam, when EVFTA was on the verge of being formally approved by the EU Parliament, unlike many other activists who vehemently opposed it, I was one of the hopefuls. I was clinging to a dream that this deal would help herald in a new era for my country economically and socially. I hope that the new investment along with EU human rights values would incrementally bring about a rallying cry for our people to break the shackles that have been chained on our necks by you know whom I am speaking of.

However, bitterly I must admit this has once again turned into another great betrayal of our trust. I believe you would have been well-briefed by other speakers about other matters, let me speak to you about Freedom of media and expression in general.

First, regarding **freedom of expression**, the 2018 Cybersecurity Law allows the government to administratively sanction statements deemed “untrue and fake news”. And the 2015 Penal Law allows the government to imprison a person up to 20 years in prison for the crimes of “abusing democratic freedoms and rights to infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of the State, rights and interests of the State.” legitimate rights of other people and organizations (article 331), “propaganda against the state (article 117).

The number of people arrested and convicted is mainly because of the opposing views they express. (Again, this is only information that we have learnt, the real number could even be bigger)

In 2019: about 40

In 2020: about 60 people

In 2021: about 41 people

2022: about 25 people

Most of these people express their views on social networking platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. The content of statements that only have a slight criticism of the government's poor management will be considered a violation of Vietnamese law.

The number of dissidents arrested for exercising freedom of expression has decreased in last year, but this is not because Vietnam suddenly respects the freedom of its people, but rather the result of years of repression, they are running out of fish to fry basically, others like me have to decide to dial down our voice to find ways of supporting people who have already fallen victims to the repressive regime. That is the reason I must cover my face today, otherwise if this leaks, I will end up being another number for your report to read this year. So please understand.

In addition, the government repeatedly uses the cybersecurity law and related decrees to administratively fine people a hefty amount (minimum VND 7.5 million, equivalent to about 300 euros). This fine is 1.5 times higher than the basic monthly salary in big cities like Hanoi and SG (5 million VND). There are cases of fines of more than 10 million VND (about 400 Euro). It is difficult to estimate the number of people and the total amount of administrative fines collected from processing online statements, but the number of fines can be very large, and the content of the alleged infringing speech can be very vague. For example, at the end of August 2022, a man in Bac Giang was administratively fined 7.5 million VND for commenting on Facebook that more police officers go to karaoke than (regular people). Or like the case of Son Tung MTP, out hottest diva in Viet Showbiz, in 2022 he releases a music video named "There is nothing at all" which depicts a life of a miserable orphan youth who was forsaken by the society and ended up killing himself. The message of the video is quite clear that we should care about the little desperate lives around ourselves, but the Ministry deemed it to be culturally inappropriate and inciting young people to commit suicide. The diva was fined 20 million (which is not big for him) but more than that he was forced to erase that video and apologized publicly about it.

These administrative fines have been very effective at shutting down people at the grassroots level. After all, if people are scared to have any comments about anything, people will not dare to think about any big criticism. People may endure punishment for their own opinion but being fined affects their ability to make the end meat for their family, when it means meals, books, and clothes for their children, they will have to shut up.

Second, on the matter of **Freedom of Media**,

In 2022, the 4 T Ministry (of Information and Communications) implemented a review and sanctioned a series of press agencies and magazines to combat the phenomenon called "journalization, privatization" newspapers". The government's argument is that magazine editors are specialized theoretical agencies, so they do not have the function of reporting news in many fields, conducting investigative and anti-negative reports in all fields. This is an action in the implementation plan of the National Press Planning Project to 2025 (in the form

of Decision No. 362/QĐ-TTg issued in 2019) which has deprived the right to establish press agencies associations, social organizations, which is guaranteed by the Press Law 2016.

The Vietnamese government has been tightening media space as a long-term strategy: on one hand they have been promulgating legal regulations subjecting social media users, companies providing social media platforms, to administrative and criminal sanctions. On the other hand, they are sweeping out their propaganda campaigns, to suppress online direct speech.

During a hearing before the National Assembly on November 4, 2022, Minister of Information and Communications Nguyen Manh Hung said that the ministry would issue regulations on "toxic news" (information that is believed to distort policies, smearing the government) will be removed from social media within 3 hours, false news will be removed within 24 hours.

Not only requiring social media platforms to remove posts on demand, the 4 T Ministry has recently imposed self-censorship responsibility on companies providing social media services, advertising companies, and hiring ads. Accordingly, not only are social media platforms are prohibited to run ads with illegal content, but also to run ads on content, which is deemed illegal, especially from the channels in the 4 T Ministry's "blacklist" (Decree 70/2021/ND-CP related to Law on Advertising). Businesses are required to review their advertising activities to avoid "blacklists", including brands, characters, and websites. Violators will be sanctioned and publicly named. As for companies found to be hosting comments that the government considers illegal, the Ministry of Information and Communications publicly threatened to block the servers and activities of these companies, along with increasing administrative fines. (Decree 53/2022/ND-CP related to the Law on Cybersecurity). This regulation has directly impacted the main source of income of social networks, which is advertising, causing multinational companies such as Facebook, Google and TikTok to cooperate more with the government. The responsibility for self-censorship, therefore, applies to all actors in cyberspace: service providers, individual users, content creators and business entities.

Speech from Reporters Without Borders

Julie Majerczak, RSF

Julie Majerczak is the Reporters Without Borders Representative to the European Institutions. She has represented the international press freedom NGO at the EU level since May 2016. Before joining RSF, Julie was a journalist for 16 years. She moved to Brussels in 2002 to report on EU affairs for the French daily newspaper Libération for which she worked for ten years. She also reported for the French daily newspaper Le Parisien, RTL radio and the online media outlets Contexte and Novethic. Before that, Julie worked in politics as an MEP assistant and as a political adviser to a French environment minister. Born in Paris, she has a Master in Law and is a graduate of Sciences Po Paris.

As most of you know, the situation of press freedom is very bad in Vietnam. Unfortunately, this is not new, but two years after the free trade agreement, it's even worse.

Vietnam is ranked 174 out of 180 countries in RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index.

Currently there are 42 journalists in prison, making Vietnam the world's fourth largest jailer of journalists.

Behind the image of a friendly country for tourists, the real face of the Vietnamese regime is closer to the worst authoritarian regimes like China and Myanmar.

Vietnam's traditional media are very closely controlled by the single party.

Recently, there have been fewer arrests and convictions because most independent journalists are in prison and the rest are silent. Fear prevails. There are no more blogs like there were a decade ago. Journalists are too afraid. The few journalists who worked for the state media who had started to publish independently were arrested and are in prison.

Winner of the 2019 RSF Press Freedom award, [Pham Doan Trang](#), was sentenced to nine years in prison on appeal last August. She was convicted of "anti-state propaganda" or, in the words of the prosecution, "false articles and statements in the media".

Trang has been completely cut off from her family and friends during the nearly two years that she has already been jailed. She is suffering from the after-effects of the Covid-19 infection she caught in prison, and other health issues (chronic sinusitis, arthritis and gynaecological problems).

Conditions in Vietnam's prisons are appalling.

The blogger **Do Cuong Dong** [died in detention](#) on 2 August as a result of the mistreatment he had received since his arrest. There are [others worrying cases](#) of old journalists with health

issues in prison (Nguyen Tuong Thuy, a 68-year old blogger and [Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam](#) (IJAVN) Vice President was meanwhile [sentenced in January 2021 to 11 years in prison](#)).

We need the Vietnamese economic partners, starting with the EU, to put pressure on the authorities.

The EU cannot continue to do business with such a regime until there is a shift in favor of human rights. The credibility of the EU in defending human rights is at stake. The EU can influence things. It should use the trade agreement with Hanoi to press for the release of journalists, a new urgency resolution, some targeted sanctions on the Vietnamese officials responsible.

Independent trade union in Vietnam according to EVFTA, Vietnam Worker Defenders

Huy Nguyen, Vietnam Worker Defenders

Huy Nguyen is the Executive Director of Vietnam Worker Defenders, a civil society organization focused on helping workers in Vietnam achieve their full potential. His personal dream is to see Vietnam become the Japan of South East Asia with its democratic system and leading edge technology yet still retain its unique culture and values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to thank our gracious host, the Honorable Marianne Vind for having me here.

I also would like to thank Members of Parliament, International Organisations and distinguished guests whose presence in this room and online speaks volume about our shared passion for making EVFTA better.

I am Huy Nguyen, a member of the organization Vietnam Worker Defenders. We are a civil society organization of like-minded individuals from all over the globe who are concerned about the welfare of workers and the freedom of civil society activists.

As a member of the US chapter of Vietnam Worker Defenders, I have a front row view of the challenges facing workers trying to organize, even in a country where unions have been part of people's lives for generations. The historic labor victory at the Amazon warehouse brought hope to organizers everywhere but I also saw major employers bring out harsh anti-union tactics going as far as firing pro-union workers and shuttering workplaces.

Even with the government ready to lend a helping hand, organizing a union in America, or Western Europe for that matter, has never been a walk in the park.

In the two years since EVFTA came into force, not one soul dares to organize a union in Vietnam. The reasons lie in two key differences between the labour environment we have here and the one in Vietnam:

The first difference is that the vast majority of workers in Vietnam lack a basic understanding of their rights at the workplace and so have a constant fear of losing their jobs.

In tackling this issue, VWD have created social media accounts to inform workers of their rights, have set up a channel to provide legal guidance to workers and have instilled in workers who aspire to organize knowledge about international labour laws.

and

The second difference is that the Vietnam government erected barriers with its Labour Code, creating insurmountable challenges to potential union organizers.

Vietnam's ratification of the Free Trade Agreement included with it a commitment to implement ILO Conventions, yet when Vietnam's Labour Code became effective in Jan of 2021, it contained articles that blatantly violated ILO Conventions;

Let us go through a few of them:

- 1) An authorised state agency must issue the registration before a workers' organisation is established and can legally operate (article 172.1).
- 2) The Government shall regulate the registration dossier, sequence and procedures; the authorisation and procedures for issuing and revoking registration; (article 172.4) .
- 3) When registering, the workers' organisation must have the minimum number of members as stipulated by the Government (article 173.1).

Just those three articles alone are enough to cause major consternation to any plan to organize, especially when none of the required information and criteria have ever been made available or disclosed by the authorities.

4) Let us consider a hypothetical case, where an independent union was somehow legally formed and leads the collective bargaining effort. If the negotiations reach a deadlock, the labour mediator or the arbitration team gets involved. The labour mediator is appointed by the government; two thirds of the arbitration team are appointed by the government and its affiliate, the remaining third appointed by employers. When negotiations hit an impasse and mediation is called upon, the deck is stacked against independent union members getting a fair ruling.

We believe that the Labour Code needs a generational change to adapt to twenty-first century laws and norms so the country can proudly join the world community and protect its workers.

At this point, let's shift our focus to the implementation of EVFTA, namely the chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development which stipulates that each party forms its own Domestic Advisory Group which will work with the other party's DAG to come up with recommendations.

However, Vietnam has a different agenda and instead of giving civil society organisations time and space for cooperation and dialogue, Vietnam uses the DAG framework as a corrupt mechanism to achieve its own goals.

In July of 2021, the Security Police in Hanoi announced the arrest of two prominent civil society activists whose organisations applied to be part of Vietnam's DAG. Soon thereafter,

Vietnam produced its DAG made up of three members, two of which are under the control of the state. In January of 2022, three additional members were added, with one suspected of lacking independence. In that same month, journalist Mai Phan Loi was sentenced to four years and lawyer Dang Dinh Bach to five years in prison on charges of tax violations.

VWD respectfully submit to EU officials the following requests:

- Please nudge EU corporations to create conditions favorable for the formation of trade unions at their facilities in Vietnam.
- Please consider VWD for membership in the EU DAG since we are confident, we can contribute positively to the process.
- Demand that Vietnam reconstitutes its DAG so members are verifiably independent civil society organisations.
- Demand Vietnam to unconditionally release activists convicted on trumped-up charges. The sense of urgency in this matter is even more pronounced given that the many imprisoned activists were maltreated, have been denied legal representation, denied adequate medical care, denied family visits while subjected to punitive prison transfers. Journalist Do Cong Duong died halfway through serving an eight-year sentence due to being denied proper medical care.

With all the disingenuous activities going on, there is one encouraging development worth looking forward to; late last year, the US Deputy Undersecretary of Labor for International Affairs {Thea Lee} visited Vietnam to resume a dialogue on labor issues. Additionally, the newly appointed US Labor Attache {Chad Salitan} is pushing Vietnam to draft a long-delayed decree that will permit the formation of worker representative organizations outside the control of the Communist Party.

VWD suggests that we join forces with such like-minded allies to make 2023 the year we bring Vietnam fully onboard per the provisions of EVFTA, make Vietnam compliant with ILO conventions, and watch independent trade unions emerge from that collective effort.

On a closing note, let us keep in mind a motto that served President Reagan so well when he uttered the words: "Trust but verify!"

I would like to bring to everyone's attention that we have compiled the document below that goes into greater details to support the information you already have. If you are interested, please fill out the sign up sheet and we will email a copy to you.

Thank you, from all of us at VWD, for making EVFTA better for the workers, for our planet and may God bless you.

Video testimony from a worker in Vietnam: <https://fb.watch/j3glE8Q2q6/>

Speech from Cosunam (Swiss-Vietnam Committee)

Sébastien Desfayes, Cosunam

Sébastien Desfayes was born in 1971. Attorney in Geneva and Member of the Geneva Parliament. His father was a war reporter in South Vietnam in 1975. After the fall of Saigon, his family hosted in the 70s and 80s Vietnamese refugees (boat people) but also a former apparatchik victim of a purge. He has been the President of Cosunam since 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, MEP Marianna Vind for organizing this event.

It is an honor for me to speak here on behalf of Cosunam.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall on October 9, 1989, a wind of freedom and hope spread throughout Eastern Europe. People thought that wind was going to go beyond the European borders to reach other bastions such as Cuba, North Korea, the People's Republic of China and, of course, Vietnam. It is in this context of effervescence that Geneva, on July 5, 1990, the Swiss-Vietnam Committee for Freedom and Democracy was born. This Swiss association was founded by Swiss and Vietnamese citizens living in Switzerland. The founders were Thierry Oppikofer, Nguyen Tang Luy, Paul Keiser and Nguyen Dang Khai.

The objectives of Cosunam include:

To advocate Human rights in Vietnam.

To support all peaceful ways for the democratization of Vietnam.

To obtain the release of political prisoners in Vietnam.

Cosunam closely follows the human rights situation in Vietnam in particular, and may rely on three embassies, including the Swiss embassy, to coordinate urgent interventions on human rights issues.

Cosunam has its seat in Geneva. Geneva is also the second largest office of the UN and the seat of the UN Human Rights Council. Switzerland is now a member of the UN Security Council which would give us more impact to address these issues.

As you may know, on October 11, 2022, Vietnam was elected to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2023-2025 term by 145 votes out of 193.

Vietnam's membership in the Human Rights Council, after an intense propaganda and lobbying campaign to support its election effort, was anything but a surprise.

Indeed, the worst and most despicable of states have been elected to the HRC.

This speaks to the hypocrisy of electoral systems, given that UN General Assembly resolution 60/251, which created the Human Rights Council, urges states voting for members to "take into account the contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human

rights." Council members are required to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" at home and abroad and to "cooperate fully with the Council."

Currently, states such as Libya, Qatar, Sudan and Cuba, to name a few, have a seat on the Human Rights Council.

Nevertheless, I was - and still am - shocked by this election, as it contradicts a UN report published some years ago.

I remember very well the month of March 2019, when Cosunam, with its president at the time Rolin Wavre, its secretary general Luy Nguyen, Khai Nguyen and myself attended the 125th session of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to listen to very harsh interventions on the human rights violations committed by the "Socialist Republic" of Vietnam.

The UN ad hoc committee, which was previously made aware of the alarming and factual reports of a dozen NGOs, including COSUNAM's Shadow Report II, drew up a pertinent report on the human rights situation in Vietnam, notably "the incoherence and contradictions between the various national laws", "the incompatibility between universal freedom of expression and the application of Vietnamese national security regulations", "the public but non-violent civil protest against the CPVN dictatorship which is assimilated by the Vietnamese authorities to a form of terrorism against the State", etc.

The UN Ad Hoc Committee focused on the central issues:

arbitrary arrests,

detention without trial,

torture and widespread ill-treatment,

heavy penalties for opinion crimes, and

and above all, the complete blockage of the police and the judicial system by the Communist Party: anything that is not the party is outlawed.

The Vietnamese delegates did not even attempt to challenge the UN's conclusions and answer these questions.

It was only a few years later that Vietnam was given a seat on the Human Rights Council, even though we and all NGOs had noted a clear deterioration in the human rights situation in Vietnam.

This is complete nonsense. The fact that Vietnam was elected to the Council is a testament to the structural problems of the current international human rights regime.

With their usual tongue-in-cheek attitude, the Vietnamese authorities, via the state media, announced upon confirmation of the election that "this result shows that Vietnam's active

participation in the activities of the UN Human Rights Council, its commitments and vigorous efforts in promoting and protecting human rights have been recognized and appreciated by the international community".

Let us take them at their word.

Vietnam must immediately commit to taking concrete steps to improve its human rights record, including releasing arbitrarily detained human rights defenders, holding democratic elections, guaranteeing basic rights and access to independent justice. We call for the repeal of Articles 109 (Subversion), 117 (Propaganda against the Vietnam state), 118 (Public disorder) and 331 (Abuse of democratic freedoms) in the Vietnamese Penal Code, which are used to silence political opposition.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix: Cosunam (Committee Suisse-Vietnam for Freedom and Democracy)

The objectives of Cosunam are:

- to sensitize the Swiss authorities and public opinion to the political and human rights situation in Vietnam.
- to support all peaceful ways for the democratization of Vietnam in the sense of establishing freedom of expression, free elections and more generally public freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- to encourage exchanges and mutual knowledge between Vietnamese and Swiss people.
- to promote the Vietnamese culture.

The past Presidents of Cosunam have been:

- Thierry Oppikofer (1990-2013) who is a journalist and was a reporter during the Vietnam war;
- Rollin Wavre (2013-2020) a former member of the Red Cross and a Member of the Geneva Parliament. Rolin passed away in April 2020

The current board members of Cosunam are

Sébastien Desfayes, President,

Nguyen Tang Luy, General Secretary,

Jean-Marc Comte, Vice-President,

Bernard Favre, Treasurer, and

Pascale Berry-Wavre, internal auditor.


For additional information about Cosunam, please feel free to consult the website <https://www.cosunam.ch/>

Recommendations, MEP Saskia Bricmont

Talking points

- Should the EU have economic relations with countries that violate human rights? has been asked since beginning before ratification
- Trade agreement needs to be used as leverage
- A lot of hypocrisy: very few voices raised when meeting with VN officials
 - no satisfying answers from EEAS regarding: human rights, environmental activists; visiting Vietnam, but no raise of concern regarding activists
- Over last months: how to use EVFTA as leverage
- EU Parliament needs to take action with European reports on the ground
- Old fashioned diplomacy isn't working anymore
 - possibility: civil societies lodge file to chief trade officer in case of human rights violations; Vietnam doesn't have direct access to those files
- unions of other countries to complain for unions in Vietnam; successful complaint can lead to dispute settlement (South Korea had to adapt its labor laws)
- commission new proposal to The Chapter about Trade and Sustainable Development in EU VN Free Trade agreements : update regarding Vietnam

Vietnam's Prisoners of Conscience - 2022 Report



VIETNAM'S PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

CONTACT:
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Updated December 2022

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Timeline: The Continued Crackdown of Human Rights in Vietnam

2022

FEBRUARY

Feb. 3: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).
Feb. 17: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).
Feb. 28: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).

MARCH

Mar. 1: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).
Mar. 23: La Van Dung arrested (11).
Mar. 28: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested (11).

APRIL

Apr. 3: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).
Apr. 10: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).
Apr. 17: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).
Apr. 20: Nguyen Thi Thanh arrested on 32 pages of "unsubstantiated" charges (11).

MAY

May 6: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).
May 11: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).
May 13: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).
May 20: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).
May 21: Tran Van Dung arrested (11).

VIETNAM'S PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Name: Mai Phan Loi
Date of Birth: 1971
Place Detained: Hanoi, Vietnam
Date of Arrest: June 24, 2021
Charges: Article 301 (2015 Penal Code) - Tax evasion
Past Work and State Repression: Mai Phan Loi is the founder of a nonprofit called Center for Media in Educating Community (MIEC) that teaches communication skills and media techniques. Loi was a deputy editor of a state-controlled legal journal called Phap Luat. But in 2016, his credentials were not renewed after his investigation into the disappearance of a Vietnamese air force plane. He sat on the executive board of a network established to monitor the implementation of the European-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA). Loi's arrest on June 24, 2021, appears to be the government's attempt to prevent civil society groups from working together. However, the authorities have charged Loi with "tax evasion" and on January 11, 2022, sentenced him to 4 years in prison and pay a fine of nearly 1.97 billion dong (82K USD). On August 11, 2022, the appeals court reduced the sentence by 3 months because Loi's family already paid part of the fine.

Name: Nguyen Thi Khanh
Date of Birth: June 15, 1976
Place Detained: Hanoi Police Detention Center No. 1, Hanoi
Date of Arrest: January 11, 2022
Charges: Article 301 (2015 Code) - Tax evasion
Past Work and State Repression: Nguyen Thi Khanh is an environmental activist. In 2011, Khanh founded the Green Innovation and Development Center (GreenID), which collaborated with the Vietnamese government to promote the use of sustainable energy rather than coal. She grew up near a coal plant and saw firsthand the resource's negative impact. In 2018, Khanh received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize which came with a monetary prize of \$250,000. On January 11, 2022, she was arrested for allegedly not paying the taxes from her prize. In that same month, three other environmental activists were sentenced under similar charges. On June 17, 2022, Khanh was sentenced to 2 years in prison. Because she is willing to pay the tax, an appeals court reduced her sentence by 3 months on November 21, 2022.

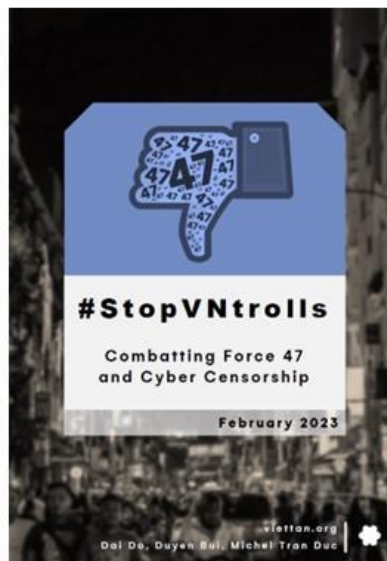
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<https://viettan.org/en/prisoners-2022>

#stopVNtrolls

Combatting Force 47 and Cyber Censorship

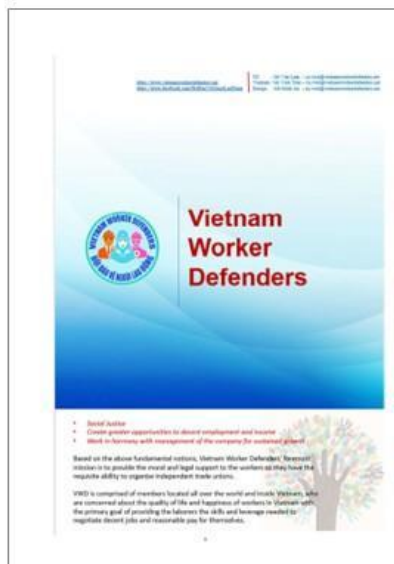


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Violation of Chapter 13 - EVFTA from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam



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