

INTERNATIONAL PEN

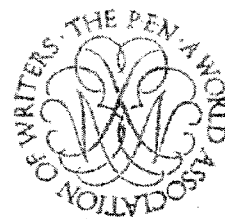
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12TH Session of the Human Rights Council Consideration of the UPR Report - Viet Nam (Thursday 24 September 2009)

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Statement by International PEN (NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

17 September 2009

International PEN, the world association of writers representing members in 102 countries, and the *Association of Writers, Editors, Illustrators, Designers, Journalists, Film Makers, Broadcasters, and Publishers*, welcome the comments made by the State of Viet Nam in its National Report to the Human Rights Council that recognise the importance of media diversity. Our organisation sees free media as an essential part of a democratic and open state, and express the hope that the comments in the report will prove to be a sign of the Vietnamese government's openness to giving greater access to information to its people.

International PEN also note that the Viet Nam authorities have made among its special priorities ensuring "freedom of expression, press and information", as well as facilitating respect for religions and beliefs.

However, our organisation take this opportunity to highlight that there remain a significant number of writers, journalists and dissidents held in detention, or under house arrest, for having expressed their opinions or dissent publicly, publishing underground or on the Internet, in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Viet Nam is a state party. According to International PEN's present records, there are eleven people imprisoned in Viet Nam today, convicted by the authorities solely for their writings. International PEN will continue to press for their release and an end to other official means of suppressing free speech. In particular, International PEN urge the authorities to lift the government-controlled screening mechanism, which aims at allowing pre- and post- publication censorship.

International PEN therefore concur with the Human Right Committee's recommendation to the Vietnamese State to put an end to restrictions on freedom of expression and to bring legislation to comply with Article 19, and demand the authorities to bring to an end the pattern of imprisonment and residence surveillance against all those who hold dissenting views.

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