

# INTERNATIONAL PEN

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## ***The Assembly of Delegates of International PEN, meeting at its 74th Congress in Bogota, Colombia, 17-22 September 2008***

**Deplores** that since the 73rd International PEN Congress in Dakar, Senegal, the situation of independent writers, journalists and defenders of freedom of expression in Viet Nam has further deteriorated. All writers released from prison in recent years continue to be placed under administrative detention. Some have been subjected to physical attacks and relentless harassment. New violent assaults, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and unjust prison sentences have been recorded, with no respect for the rights of the defence and the independence of judges;

**Shocked and indignant** about the inhuman living conditions in labour camps, where prisoners of opinion are held in solitary confinement and/or incommunicado. Undernourished, deprived of medical care and hygiene, they have been attacked, humiliated and threatened by common law detainees. Among the victims: writer **Tran Khai Thanh Thuy** (f), who spent nine months in prison whilst suffering from tuberculosis and diabetes. Now released, she still bears noticeable scars on her face and leg as a result of ill-treatment in prison.

**Protests** the internment in a psychiatric hospital for her critical writings of **Bui Kim Thanh** (f), human rights lawyer and Internet writer, from early March to July 2008. She was previously held without charge in psychiatric detention from November 2006 to July 2007 for defending free of charge hundreds of Dan Oan (victims of injustice), women peasants arbitrarily dispossessed of their land. During her incarceration she was violently beaten and forcibly injected of unknown medication.

**Deeply disturbed** by the ongoing detention in forced labour camps of independent writers and journalists, condemned to heavy prison sentences at unfair trials followed by

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administrative detention for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. Their only 'crime' has been to write articles about corruption, the abuse of

authority and human rights violations, or to speak out against the repression of dissenting voices, and to grant interviews to the overseas media. Those detained for their critical writings include:

- **Nguyen Van Ly**, priest, editor of the clandestine review **Tu Do Ngon Luan** (Freedom of Opinion), sentenced to 8 year-imprisonment. His co-editors **Nguyen Phong** and **Nguyen Binh Thanh**, sentenced respectively to 6 and 5 years-imprisonment; **Hoang Thi Anh Dao** (f) and **Le Thi Le Hang** (f) sentenced respectively to 2 years and 18 months- suspended imprisonment;
- **Le Thi Cong Nhan** (f), human rights lawyer and Internet writer, sentenced to 3 years' - imprisonment. - **Nguyen Van Dai**, human rights lawyer, Internet writer and editor of the underground review **Tu Do Dan Chu** (Freedom and Democracy), sentenced to 4 years'- imprisonment;
- **Tran Quoc Hien**, human rights lawyer and Internet writer, sentenced to 5 years imprisonment;
- **Le Nguyen Sang**, physician and Internet writer, sentenced to 4 years' -imprisonment;
- **Nguyen Bac Truyen**, human rights lawyer and Internet writer, sentenced to 3 years and 6 months-imprisonment;
- **Huynh Nguyen Dao**, journalist and Internet writer, sentenced to 2 years and 6 months-imprisonment;
- **Truong Quoc Huy**, **Vu Hoang Hai**, **Nguyen Ngoc Quang** and **Pham Ba Hai**, Internet writers, sentenced respectively to 6, 5, 3 and 2 years'-imprisonment;
- **Truong Minh Duc**, journalist, sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, in very poor health;

**Mourns** the death of Buddhist monk and intellectual **Le Dinh Nhan** (**VenThich Huyen Quang**), on 5 July 2008 at the age of 89 after being held under house arrest since 1982;

**Fears for** the fragile health of fellow Buddhist monk **Dang Phuc Tue** (**Ven. Thich Quang Do**), aged 80, who has been held under house arrest since 2003;

**Appalled** at the recent crackdown of independent journalists, in April and May 2008, particularly the arrests of journalist **Nguyen Hoang Hai** (pen-name Dieu Cay), **Nguyen Van Hai** and **Nguyen Viet Chien**, respectively investigative reporters of the newspapers Tuoi Tre (Youth) and Thanh Nien (Young People);

**Alarmed** by illegal “people’s tribunals” where independent writers and journalists are denounced, blamed and humiliated by a hostile crowd organized by Party cadres and public security policemen. Among these victims: **Le Thanh Tung**, veteran journalist and Internet writer, “tried” on 25 April 2008. He was accused of being a traitor for writing and publishing online several articles on the situation of human rights and democracy, and an account of his life, entitled “Memoir of a Former Volunteer Fighter in the Vietnamese People’s Army”.

**Urges** the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam’s government to:

1. **release** immediately and unconditionally all independent writers, journalists, and intellectuals currently detained for having exercised their right to freedom of expression;
2. **cease** all attacks, harassment and threats of arrest against those independent writers, journalists, and intellectuals;
3. **improve** conditions of detention in prisons and in camps, to allow sick prisoners to be hospitalized, to receive adequate medical care and to facilitate family visits ;
4. **abolish** censorship and **lift** all arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom of association and freedom to create and to publish.