



PRESS RELEASE

UN Rights Tribunal Calls for Release of Vietnamese Blogger Activist

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The detention of Vietnamese blogger, lawyer and human rights activist, Le Quoc Quan, has been condemned by a United Nations human rights tribunal as violating his right to freedom of expression and his right to a fair trial.



The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, a tribunal set up under the UN's Human Rights Council, found that Le Quoc Quan had been targeted for his work as an activist and as a blogger and called for his immediate release or for his conviction to be reviewed by an independent court. It also recommended that Viet Nam should pay damages to Le Quoc Quan for his arbitrary detention.



While Le Quoc Quan had been imprisoned for alleged tax evasion, the tribunal found that his detention might be “the result of his peaceful exercise of the rights and freedoms guaranteed under international human rights law” and “related to his blog articles on civil and political rights.” The tribunal added that “given Mr Quan’s history as a human rights defender and blogger, the real purpose of the detention and prosecution might eventually be to punish him for exercising his right [to freedom of expression] and to deter others from doing so.”



The Working Group’s condemnation is in response to a [petition](#) filed by the [Media Legal Defence Initiative](#), Media Defence-Southeast Asia, Lawyers for Lawyers, Avocats Sans Frontières, Front Line Defenders, Access, English PEN, Reporters Without Borders, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, ARTICLE 19, Index on Censorship and Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada.



These organisations now call on the government of Viet Nam to comply with the decision of the United Nations Working Group and release Le Quoc Quan immediately. They reiterate that the conviction and ongoing detention of Le Quoc Quan are arbitrary and violate his rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, a fair trial and his rights as a human rights defender.



The decision of the Working Group (A/HRC/WGAD/2013) can be downloaded from the website of the Media Legal Defence Initiative by [clicking here](#).

Notes to editors:

- Le Quoc Quan was arrested on 27 December 2012 on baseless charges of tax evasion. Following his arrest, he was held incommunicado and denied permission to see his lawyer for two months. Repeated requests by his family to visit him were also denied. Mr Quan first saw a family member at his trial on 2



October 2013, at which he was convicted of evading corporate income tax and sentenced to 30 months imprisonment and a fine of 1.2 billion dong (approximately USD 59,000). He has appealed this decision.

- The Vietnamese government has long persecuted Le Quoc Quan for his human rights work. In 2007, after representing numerous victims of human rights violations, he was disbarred from practicing as a lawyer on suspicion of engaging in “activities to overthrow the regime”. He has been arrested several times for continuing his human rights advocacy. Following an attack by unknown assailants in August 2012, he was hospitalised. The attack was never investigated by the police.

For more information, please contact:

- Nani Jansen, Senior Legal Counsel, Media Legal Defence Initiative: nani.jansen@mediadefence.org, +44 780 540 4089
- Gail Davidson, Executive Director, Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada: lrwc@portal.ca, +1 604 738 0338
- Adrie van de Streek, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers: info@lawyersforlawyers.nl and +31 626 274 390
- Jochai Ben-Avie, Policy Director, Access Now: jochai@accessnow.org and +1 347 806 9531
- HR Dipendra, Director, Media Defence – Southeast Asia: dipendra3000@gmail.com and +60 13 366 1222
- Eva Galperin, Senior Policy Analyst, Electronic Frontier Foundation: eva@eff.org and +1 415 436 9333
- Benjamin Ismail, Head Asia-Pacific Desk, Reporters Without Borders: asia@rsf.org and +33 1 44 83 84 84
- Mary Lawlor, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders: mary@frontlinedefenders.org
- Cat Lucas, Writers at Risk Programme Manager, English PEN: cat@englishpen.org and +44 20 7324 2539
- Nathalie Muller Sarallier, Avocats Sans Frontières Network: coordination@asf-network.com and +33 5 34 31 78 50
- Kirsty Hughes, Chief Executive, Index on Censorship: enquiries@indexoncensorship.org
- Thomas Hughes, Executive Director, Article 19: thomas@article19.org, +44 20 7324 2500