



Bau Bi
Tuong Than
Association



Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

STOP THE CRACKDOWN IN VIETNAM

November 7, 2017

Dear APEC Leaders,

As you prepare for the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' meeting in Da Nang, Vietnam on November 11-12, we wish to call your attention to the worsening human rights record of the host government.

Over the last year, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has carried out a major political crackdown against peaceful expression. According to verified reports, authorities have arrested or exiled at least 25 peaceful activists and bloggers. In a series of sham trials, the Vietnamese government has orchestrated the wrongful conviction and sentencing of prominent human rights defenders and bloggers including Tran Thi Nga, Nguyen Van Oai, and Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh to long prison sentences. The Vietnamese government has used unsubstantiated national security concerns to justify, and illegitimate charges to carry out, the criminalization of free expression, dissemination of information, and peaceful advocacy.

This crackdown is contrary to the goal of "Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future" which is the stated theme of this year's APEC gathering. Arbitrary detention, censorship, and state-sponsored violence against activists and human rights defenders are not only an affront to our common humanity but a grave violation of international human rights laws and standards.

We believe it is in the strong interest of APEC and of the international community to speak out against the widespread and systematic violations of human rights violations in Vietnam. If the Vietnamese government does not comply with its international human rights obligations -- such as those arising from the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Against Torture -- how can you have faith that the Vietnamese government will honor any agreement produced at APEC?

One of Vietnam's most renowned human rights lawyers Nguyen Van Dai, has been arbitrarily detained for almost two years without trial, since being arrested on December 16, 2015. As a lawyer, blogger and human rights defender, Nguyen Van Dai advocated for legal reform, multi-party democracy, and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. Respect for these internationally recognized and protected rights and freedoms is the bedrock principle of APEC's objective to "sustain the growth and development of the region for the common good of its peoples."

The signatories to this letter represent many Vietnamese and international organizations advocating for freedom of expression. We respectfully request you to urge the Vietnamese authorities to stop the crackdown and work with other APEC members towards a "shared future" characterized by respect for international human rights and freedoms.

Signed,

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¹Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, 18 November 2012, adopted by Viet Nam 18 November 2012. available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50c9fea82.html> [accessed 6 October 2017]*