



People wear face masks to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in Hanoi, Vietnam, on August 6, 2020. Journalist Pham Doan Trang was arrested on anti-state charges on October 6, 2020. (AP/Hau Dinh)

Journalist Pham Doan Trang arrested on anti-state charges in Vietnam

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Bangkok, October 7, 2020 – Vietnamese authorities should immediately and unconditionally release journalist Pham Doan Trang and drop anti-state charges against her, the Committee to Protect Journalists said today.

Trang, a prominent journalist who contributes regularly to several independent news sites, was arrested just before midnight yesterday in Ho Chi Minh City, according to news reports. Get Help (<https://cpj.org/emergency-response/how-to-get-help/>)

She was charged with “propaganda against the State” under Article 117 of the penal code, according to a statement posted on the Ministry of Public Security’s website today. Convictions under Article 117 carry maximum jail terms of 20 years. Vietnam has detained and threatened several journalists under the charge in recent months, as CPJ has documented.

“Authorities should immediately release journalist Pham Doan Trang, drop the charges against her, and cease their decade-long campaign of harassing her,” said Shawn Crispin, CPJ’s senior Southeast Asia representative. “Vietnam must stop treating independent journalists like criminals.”

Vietnam’s Ministry of Public Security did not immediately respond to CPJ’s request for comment on Trang’s arrest and detention filed through the ministry’s website.

The local *VN Express* news website quoted Major General To An Xo, a Ministry of Public Security spokesman, as saying that Trang was transferred from Ho Chi Minh City to the capital Hanoi for investigations. The spokesman said police seized documents and equipment during her arrest, the report said.

CPJ could not independently verify where Trang was being detained and under what conditions.

Reuters reported that Trang was arrested just hours after an annual U.S.-Vietnam human rights dialogue meeting was concluded.

Trang, who reports widely on human rights-related issues including cases of police abuse, founded the local *Luat Khe* legal magazine (stopsp.org) and edits and writes for the independent English-language *The Vietnamese* news site, according to news reports. [Get Help \(https://cpj.org/emergency-response/how-to-get-help/\)](https://cpj.org/emergency-response/how-to-get-help/)

Trang wrote on her personal Facebook page earlier this year that she had faced persistent police harassment from September 2019 to February 2020, Radio Free Asia reported.

In 2018, Trang went into hiding after being assaulted by police during interrogations, CPJ documented at the time. She has also spent time abroad in self-exile after facing official harassment, CPJ documented in a 2014 special report on her situation.

Trang has received various international awards for her courage in reporting in the face of official harassment.

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