

Journalist "unmarried" Pham Doan Trang won the 2019 Press Freedom Award

September 13, 2019



Freelance journalist Pham Doan Trang was awarded the 2019 Freedom of the Press Award by Reporters Without Borders, in the category of Influence.

Run for 27 years, the Freedom of the Press awards honor those who refuse to remain silent, "despite the most extreme circumstances" and "threats to life and body," the statement said. Reporters Without Borders writes.

Ms. Pham Doan Trang of Vietnam is one of three women to win the 2019 RSF Press Freedom Award. The other two are Caroline Muscat from Malta and Eman Al Nafjan from Saudi Arabia.

On behalf of Mrs. Doan Trang to receive the human rights award

Blogger Pham Doan Trang hid after being interrogated

Three people, one human rights award recipient

The announcement and award ceremony took place on the evening of September 12 in Berlin.

Speaking at the ceremony, Berlin Mayor Michael Müller said that freedom of the press, alongside freedom of expression and the right to protest, is very important, "for transparency in society, in keeping power in check. and social activities".

Among the laureates is Chinese dissident and 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, now deceased.



| Berlin Mayor Michael Müller speaking at the award ceremony

From Hanoi, journalist Pham Doan Trang gave an interview to the BBC after hearing the news from Berlin.

Ms. Pham Doan Trang: Knowing that I have been awarded the Press Freedom award in the category of Influence, I am very happy. That means that Reporters Without Borders organization evaluates that my works have had a certain impact on the Vietnamese reader community.

I am very grateful to my readers. My main feeling right now is to thank those who have read my work, both at home and abroad. I believe that it is no coincidence that Reporters Without Borders is aware of my works.

BBC: *This year's announcement and award ceremony took place in Berlin. She did not attend even though she was invited. Why?*

Ms. Pham Doan Trang: To go to Berlin, I will definitely have to work with the Ministry of Public Security in the exit procedures. There is no shortage of cases of activists in Vietnam who already have exit visas from foreign countries and bought plane tickets, but when they go to the airport, they are detained by the police and not allowed to go.

I knew in advance that I would fall into such a situation. Not to mention, if it is possible to leave the country, when returning, immigration procedures will also be detained, will have to go through unpleasant dialogues with the security party.

I know they will set conditions, and I also know in advance that I will not accept them.

So I decided not to go, to avoid having to go through those uncomfortable conversations.



Pham Doan Trang's representative to attend the award ceremony in Berlin is freelance journalist Trinh Huu Long

***BBC:** Although the press freedom award has been awarded for nearly 30 years, it is known that she is the first Vietnamese to be awarded the award as a professional reporter . Will this have any impact on the activities of you and freelance journalists in Vietnam in the future?*

Ms. Pham Doan Trang: I don't want to make predictions about the future, but I hope that this award will have a positive value not only for me personally but also for the whole community that fights and works for democracy. , the community of freelance journalists, bloggers, netizens in Vietnam, who dare to use social networks to voice their opinions, who are always direct victims of bullying, oppression and terrorism by the police.

Thousands of bloggers have been constantly "noticed", and in the past two years alone, hundreds of people have been sent to prison for things related to livestream on Facebook.



PHAM DOAN TRANG

Freelance journalist Pham Doan Trang has worked for more than 10 years in the official press agencies of the state

I hope this award of mine, as the mission of Reporters Without Borders puts it, will bring comfort to journalists in countries that are still authoritarian, so that they can feel that they are not alone, they are always supported, supported, encouraged, encouraged, knowing that their work is not in vain, unknown to anyone.

I hope that in the near future, in Vietnam, there will continue to be more people boldly speaking up, voicing their views and opinions on socio-political issues.

In particular, I very much look forward to the appearance of more writers, more freelance journalists, independent journalists, bloggers with professional writing careers, including 'right-margin' journalists, participating in the event. social democratization through the media.

***BBC:** She started her career as a journalist in what she calls a 'right-wing' journalist before moving to a freelance journalist position. What do you think is the biggest difference between your role when holding a pen and writing as a person in the mainstream press system and when holding a pen to write in another marginal position?*

Ms. Pham Doan Trang: I have worked at the mainstream newspaper, which we often call the state newspaper, or the state-owned newspaper for quite a long time. I worked from 2000 until 2013.

During those 13 years, I worked continuously for VnExpress, VietnamNet, Ho Chi Minh City Law Newspaper, VTC Television, and other places, about 10 different press agencies.

I also do publishing work. Therefore, I think I have a good understanding of journalism in Vietnam under the censorship of the Communist Party's Propaganda Department.

Since switching to being a freelance journalist, or as we call ourselves 'unmarried' journalists, I see a lot of difference.



PHAM DOAN TRANG

| Pham Doan Trang's books mainly reach domestic readers

I also realized that there are many things that we have misunderstood from time immemorial.

The most obvious difference is more repression.

Free journalists are persecuted by every means, from the subtlest to the grossest. The free space for 'margin' journalists is much less than for oriented journalists.

Another big difference that people often misunderstand, or so to say is a misconception so far. That is, people think freelance journalists will not be as influential as mainstream journalists. The articles of freelance journalists are not read by anyone, or only have a negligible number of readers. That is a common concept, and is especially common in mainstream journalism and in police circles.

I know that many of my colleagues in mainstream newspapers question why they have to break their pen to work as 'reactionaries', why not go to work for a certain newspaper but go freelance. How many people can it be written down like that?

While if we put ourselves in a newspaper that follows the direction of the Party and the State, we still have the opportunity to have the article published in the newspaper, read by many people, create a greater influence, maybe even influence to policy, through public officials read their articles and they will change their policies, change their minds, etc..

They argue that the influence of the mainstream press is still stronger than that of the fringe press.



I think that is a misconception, and every day I find it more and more wrong.

We see that bloggers, Facebookers who have never been recognized by the state, such as Wind Trader, have great influence.

So does publishing. When I embarked on 'off-the-shelf' publishing, i.e. not with officially licensed state publishers, I found that the 'off-the-shelf' audience was surprisingly large.

I believe the readership of the Liberal Publishing, such an 'out-of-the-box' publisher, is larger than that of the National Political Publishing House, i.e. the Truth Publishing of the day.

In comparison, the number of prints is more, the number of readers is more, the influence is more, the level of interaction with readers is much more.

We had people delivering Liberal Publishing books, specifically my books, to readers, and there were readers who hugged the transcriber and cried, saying, "Thank you for your help. brave enough for us to have these books."

Of course, there is also the risk of being 'trapped' by the police, but we can feel the genuine affection that our readers have for us.

So it can be said that the noticeable difference is the degree of influence between the 'out-of-the-box' and the mainstream, the level of readers' affection for each.



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