

# Nine-year sentence for prominent journalist Pham Doan Trang reaffirms Vietnam's 'abysmal' press freedom record

December 15, 2021 9:22 AM EST

Bangkok, December 15, 2021 – Vietnamese authorities should immediately and unconditionally release journalist Pham Doan Trang, and stop imprisoning independent news reporters for their work, the Committee to Protect Journalists said today.

In a one-day trial yesterday, Hanoi's People's Court sentenced Trang to nine years in prison under Article 117 of the penal code, a provision that bars "making, storing, distributing or spreading" news or information against the state, international [news reports](#) said. She did not plead guilty and will consider an appeal, Reuters [reported](#), citing one of her lawyers.

Trang, who has been [detained since October 2020](#), [reports](#) widely on human rights-related issues, including cases of police abuse; she founded the local legal magazine *Luat Khoa* and edits and writes for the independent English-language news site *The Vietnamese*, according to news reports and [CPJ research](#).

"Pham Doan Trang's harsh sentencing on bogus anti-state charges reaffirms Vietnam's abysmal record as one of the world's worst jailers of journalists," said Shawn Crispin, CPJ's senior Southeast

Asia representative. “Trang should be released immediately and unconditionally, and be allowed to resume her work as a journalist without fear of reprisal.”



A screen shot of journalist Pham Doan Trang from a video by The 88 Project, an advocacy group that tracks Vietnamese political prisoners, broadcast on YouTube on May 11, 2019.

Presiding Judge Chu Phuong Ngoc gave one day’s notice of Trang’s trial date and repeatedly interrupted the journalist during the trial, saying her “behavior was dangerous for society” and that she should be “severely punished” for acting against the state, according to *The Washington Post* and other [reports](#).

CPJ’s calls to Hanoi’s People’s Court for comment connected to an answering machine that said “please try again later.” Vietnam’s Ministry of Public Security did not immediately respond to CPJ’s request for comment on Trang’s conviction sent through the ministry’s website.

Days before her arrest in October 2020, Trang released a [letter](#) titled, “Just in case I am imprisoned” that circulated online and was cited in news reports. The letter called for electoral reforms and listed several personal goals for her imprisonment.

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.

Vietnam ranked as the world's fourth-worst jailer of journalists, with at least 23 members of the press held behind bars for their work, on CPJ's annual **prison census** published earlier this month.