

## VIETNAM

# Vietnam opposes Britain, Canada awarding dissident journalists

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VOA Vietnamese

Vietnam objected to the British and Canadian Foreign Ministry's awarding a press freedom award to freelance journalist Pham Doan Trang, who is currently serving a prison sentence, and said that the awarding of a prize by two Western countries to a person "violated Vietnamese law" is not conducive to the development of bilateral relations with Hanoi.

The British and Canadian governments announced the awarding of the 2022 Media Freedom Award to Trang, Vietnam's most famous dissident journalist, at the Press Freedom Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, on February 10. This is the latest award for Trang, who is internationally recognized for her work fighting for democracy in a Vietnam where there is little freedom of the press and is often criticized for its poor human rights record.

Responding to this, Deputy Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi, Pham Thu Hang, said that the British and Canadian Foreign Ministry's awarding the award to Ms. Trang, whom the Vietnamese government considers "a violative individual". breaking the law", is an "unobjective" and "inappropriate" action.

Responding to a reporter's request for comment on the awarding, Hang said on February 18 that the 44-year-old dissident journalist had been "arrested and tried for several times in violation of the law." serious."

Ms. Trang was arrested in October 2020 and sentenced to nine years in prison for “Propaganda against the state” last December. Western governments, including the US, and international human rights organizations have voiced their objections to the Vietnamese government's conviction.

According to the deputy spokeswoman of BNG Vietnam, Ms. Trang has "contacted organizations and individuals abroad, published illegal publications with content to propagate, guide, and incite activities to overthrow the government." overthrow the people's government." Ms. Hang said this behavior was "dangerous to society."

In addition to co-founding Luat Khoa Magazine, an independent journalistic form in Vietnam, Trang is also the author of many books banned from being published in the country, including "Popular Politics" and "Protesting non-violence." Before her arrest, Ms. Trang and Mr. Will Nguyen, a Vietnamese-American citizen who had been detained in Vietnam, published the Dong Tam Report, which outlined the "human rights violations" of the Hanoi government in the past year. a deadly raid because of a land dispute between the authorities and the people of Dong Tam village.

British Secretary of State Lord Ahmad called Ms. Trang a "brave human rights defender of Vietnam" while the Canadian Foreign Ministry called the jailed Vietnamese journalist "a supporter of human rights and the rule of law". rights” when awarding the imprisoned Vietnamese democracy activist.

BNG Vietnam's deputy spokesman on February 18 warned that the awarding action of the British and Canadian BNG to Ms. Trang would be "not conducive to the development of bilateral relations with Vietnam."

The UK and Canada have yet to respond to Vietnam's objections to awarding Ms. Trang, who was awarded the Press Freedom Award by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) last year. 2019.

Vietnam is classified by RSF as one of the countries with the least press freedom in the world and is also one of the countries that imprison the most journalists.

However, Ms. Hang on February 18 affirmed that Vietnam "always cares about protecting and promoting basic human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right to access information."

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