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Vietnam: Immediately release Pham Doan Trang and stop persecution of free speech

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Update: October 26 — The People’s Court of Hanoi postponed until further notice the trials of Pham Doan Trang and **land rights activists**

[\[https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/trinh-07212021164941.html\]](https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/trinh-07212021164941.html) **Trinh Ba Phuong** [\[https://the88project.org/profile/449/trinh-ba-phuong/\]](https://the88project.org/profile/449/trinh-ba-phuong/) and **Nguyen Thi Tam** [\[https://the88project.org/profile/501/nguyen-thi-tam/\]](https://the88project.org/profile/501/nguyen-thi-tam/) on the basis that the prosecutors were in Covid-19-related quarantine. The hearings had originally been **scheduled** [\[https://www.thevietnamese.org/2021/10/vietnam-briefing-pham-doan-trangs-trial-expected-to-begin-in-november-vietnam-slowly-reopening-its-economy-after-long-running-covid-19-lockdowns/\]](https://www.thevietnamese.org/2021/10/vietnam-briefing-pham-doan-trangs-trial-expected-to-begin-in-november-vietnam-slowly-reopening-its-economy-after-long-running-covid-19-lockdowns/) for November 3 and 4.

October 26, 2021 — Today, ahead of Pham Doan Trang’s trial on November 4, Access Now and other human rights organizations are urgently **calling on** [\[https://www.accessnow.org/joint-statement-release-doan-trang\]](https://www.accessnow.org/joint-statement-release-doan-trang) Vietnam’s government to immediately release the independent journalist and human rights defender. The coalition condemns the arbitrary detention of Doan Trang, and is pushing for all charges against her to be dropped.

“The arrest and arbitrary detention of Doan Trang — a prominent civil society leader — is a signal to all that the authorities in Vietnam will quash any critical speech,” said **Dhevy Sivaprakasam, Asia Pacific Policy Counsel at Access Now**. “She should not have been arrested in the first place — the politically-motivated charges against her must be dropped.”

Doan Trang was **arrested** [\[https://www.voanews.com/a/press-freedom_rights-groups-deplore-arrest-vietnam-writer-and-activist-pham-doan-trang/6196876.html\]](https://www.voanews.com/a/press-freedom_rights-groups-deplore-arrest-vietnam-writer-and-activist-pham-doan-trang/6196876.html) in Ho Chi Minh City on October 7, 2020, and charged with “making, storing, distributing or disseminating information, documents and items against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” She has been held in arbitrary detention and denied access to her family for

over a year. She was also prevented from meeting with a lawyer until October 19, 2021. Her indictment — which was only made public on October 18, 2021 — confirms a charge of alleged dissemination of anti-State propaganda under article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code. A similar charge under article 117 of the 2015 Penal Code was dropped.

Vietnam’s laws have **long been abused**

[<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/3243/2020/en/>] to curtail legitimate expression of independent journalists, human rights defenders, writers, activists, and many others. People have been arrested and charged for merely posting opinions and information on politics, social justice, or matters of public interest on social media platforms such as **Facebook** **[<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-10-22/facebook-censorship-suppress-dissent-vietnam>]**, accused under the 1999 and 2015 Penal Code for allegedly “conducting propaganda”, “sabotaging national solidarity”, “fomenting public disorder” and “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State.”

“Democratic freedoms — when genuinely upheld and protected — will not infringe upon the interests of Vietnamese society, but strengthen them,” said **Raman Jit Singh Chima, Senior International Counsel and Asia Pacific Director at Access Now**. “Vietnam’s leaders should stop curtailing civic freedoms, and not only comply with international law, but do justice by the people.”

Doan Trang is an independent journalist, writer, and human rights advocate with decades of experience in Vietnam, and has won **several awards** **[<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/award-09132019144843.html>]** for her work.

Read the **full statement** (**English** **[<https://www.accessnow.org/joint-statement-release-doan-trang>]** / **Vietnamese** **[<https://www.accessnow.org/joint-statement-release-doan-trang-vietnamese>]**).

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