



Vietnamese activist Pham Doan Trang sentenced to nine years in jail

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A prominent activist and journalist in Vietnam was sentenced to nine years in prison on Tuesday for disseminating information critical of the nation's government.

Pham Doan Trang, who was arrested last year, received a harsher sentence than the seven to eight years prosecutors had asked for during a trial in Hanoi People's Court, according to [The Washington Post](#).

The decision to jail Trang, who has written several articles critical of the country's communist government, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, was met with widespread condemnation on Tuesday.

The U.S. State Department [said in a statement](#) they condemned the jailing of a journalist, saying she did "nothing more than peacefully express her opinions."

"The United States calls on the Vietnamese government to release Trang, who has been recognized internationally for her work to advance human rights and good governance in Vietnam, and to allow all individuals in Vietnam to express their views freely and without fear of retaliation," the statement read.

Human rights organization Amnesty International also [published a post criticizing Trang's detention](#), calling attention to the journalist's reports about water pollution killing marine life near Vietnam and the construction of a military airport near a village that led to violent clashes.

"It is outrageous that the Vietnamese authorities are convicting Pham Doan Trang, a courageous journalist and human rights defender, who has for years fought for a just, inclusive, and rights-respecting Vietnam," said Ming Yu Hah, the deputy regional director for campaigns. "Her work should be celebrated and protected, not punished and criminalized."

Authorities detained Trang in October 2020 in Ho Chi Minh City and charged the author with "making, storing, distributing or disseminating information, documents and items against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

At the time, nations and human rights organizations criticized the arrest as arbitrary and a suppression of freedom of speech and the press.

In a letter to the United Nations, Vietnam officials argued they respect freedom of speech and activism in the country, but wrote they had detained Trang, along with several other activists, for violating Vietnam law. Officials accused Trang of attempting to overthrow the government and "slandering and harming the reputation of individuals and organizations."

"The arrest of Pham Thi Doan Trang is to investigate violations of the law, abuse of social network and internet to post information that distorts the truth with a view to causing public anxiety," the letter read.

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The indictment called attention to Trang and an organization she co-founded, Green Trees, for writing about: a steel plant, which spilled toxic waste in 2016 and killed marine life; religious freedom in Vietnam; and general reports about human rights in the nation, according to Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch said Trang was "denied access to her family and legal representation" for over a year and was only allowed to meet with a lawyer on Oct. 19, shortly before her November trial.

Trang is one of the best known writers and internet bloggers in Vietnam. She won the Press Freedom Award from Reporters Without Borders in 2019.