

Vietnamese journalist Pham Doan Trang jailed for nine years for defaming government



Journalist Pham Doan Trang has been sentenced to nine years in prison (Image source: RFA Tiếng Việt/YouTube)

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the U.S. State Department have called for Trang's release

by [D J Eaton](#)

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Journalist Pham Doan Trang has been sentenced to nine years in prison for defaming the Vietnamese government. The Washington Post noted that the sentence was longer than the 7-8 years which prosecutors had requested. Condemning the December 14 court ruling, U.S. State Department Spokesman Ned Price said Trang had done "nothing more than peacefully express her opinions."

The Washington Post said the 43-year-old journalist had been interrupted several times by a judge during her trial in Hanoi. Judge Chu Phuong Ngoc was quoted by Deutsche Welle (DW) as saying Trang deserved to be "severely punished" for her "dangerous" actions.

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One of Trang's five lawyers told the Washington Post there would be an appeal.

Criticizing the government

The Hill said Trang had written numerous articles criticizing the government of [Vietnam](#). She had also been responsible for forming the environmental organization Green Trees, the Washington Post said. She received the 2019 Press Freedom Prize from Reporters Without Borders and the 2017 Homo Homini Award from the human rights organization People in Need, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA). The U.S.-funded broadcaster also noted that Trang had drawn the ire of the Vietnamese government by authoring a book on political activism.

Prison sentence is 'outrageous'

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists responded to the journalist's prison sentence with posts on Twitter.

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Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch said the court's action had been "outrageous." He posted a link to a Reuters report where he was quoted as saying the incarceration of Trang was "a searing indictment of everything that is wrong with authoritarian Vietnam today."

Ming Yu Hah of Amnesty International said the journalist's actions "should be celebrated and protected, not punished and criminalized." Ming added that Trang's ordeal "is cruelly emblematic of the Vietnamese authorities' repression of peaceful human rights activism across the country." Ming, too, called the journalist's prison sentence "outrageous."

"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 Viet Nam." <https://t.co/94m0yLXOpx>

— amnestypress (@amnestypress) [December 14, 2021](#)

In one of its posts on Twitter, the Committee to Protect Journalists said: "Authorities should immediately and unconditionally release journalist Pham Doan Trang and stop imprisoning independent news reporters for their work."

A tweet from Pen International included a comment from the chair of the organization's Writers in Prison Committee, Ma Thida: "This is a reprehensible outcome in a reprehensible case."

Nine-year sentence for prominent journalist Pham Doan Trang reaffirms #Vietnam's 'abysmal' #pressfreedom record <https://t.co/1A801tXD8c>

— Committee to Protect Journalists (@pressfreedom)
December 15, 2021

Legal Initiatives for Vietnam

In 2014, Trang helped start a project that would eventually become Legal Initiatives for Vietnam, according to the organization's website.

The NGO established its headquarters in California in 2017, the website says. "Legal Initiatives for Vietnam's mission is to build a democratic society in Vietnam through independent journalism, research, and education," it says.

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D J Eaton
Contributor

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Blasting SA, IDI CHE-247.845.224, Via Carlo Frasca, 3 - 6900 Lugano (Switzerland) Tel: +39 0690258937

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