

INTERNATIONAL • VIETNAM

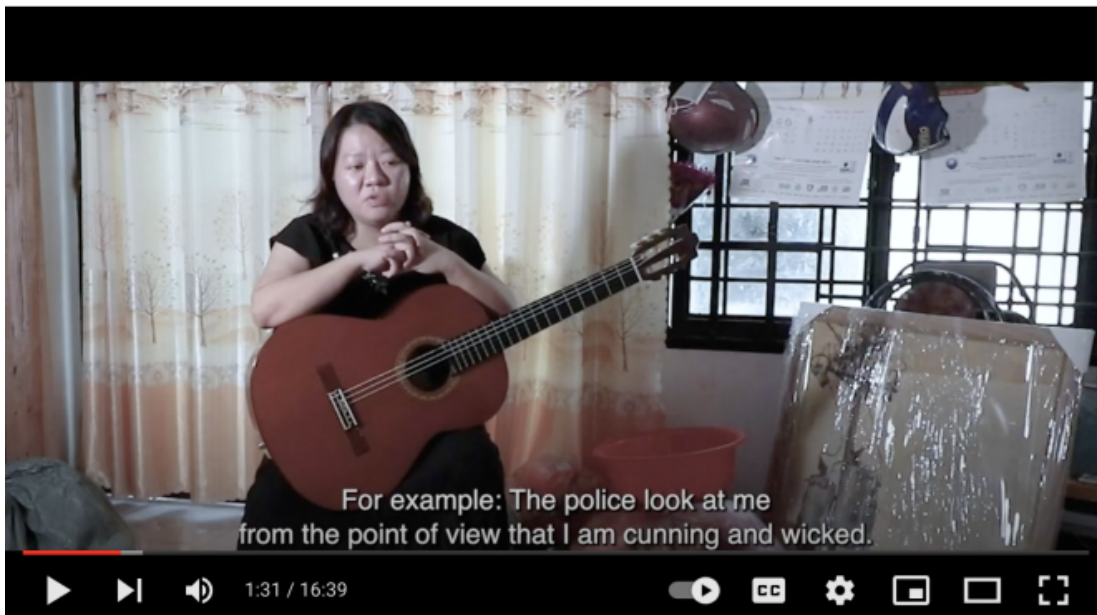
Vietnamese journalist Pham Doan Trang sentenced to nine years in prison

Rewarded abroad by several prizes crowning her fight for freedom of expression, the writer and blogger was accused of “anti-state propaganda” and statements “prejudicial” to social stability.

By Bruno Philip

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Screenshot of journalist Pham Doan Trang, from a video by The 88 Project, an advocacy group that tracks Vietnamese political prisoners, posted on YouTube. THE 88 PROJECT / YOUTUBE

Nine years in prison for “*crimes*” of writing and “*anti-state propaganda*” : this is the harsh sentence to which the famous Vietnamese journalist and blogger Pham Doan Trang was sentenced on Tuesday, December 14. Aged 43, the young woman was accused by the Hanoi regime of “*defaming the government of Vietnam and inventing false news*”.

The fact of having granted interviews in the past to the BBC and to Radio Free Asia, a media financed by the United States Congress, probably aggravated his case: whereas a sentence of seven to eight years had been requested against her, the judges imposed an even heavier sentence on the journalist, on the pretext that her statements were “*prejudicial*” to the stability of Vietnamese society.

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“*The pathetic arguments put forward by the Hanoi court to justify its verdict do not deceive anyone,*” reacted the head of the Asia-Pacific office of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Daniel Bastard. *We are*

dealing with political justice, at the orders of the ruling party, whose sole purpose is to punish a journalist who simply tried to inform her fellow citizens. Trang was, in 2019, one of the three winners of the RSF prize for freedom of the press.

The blogger refused to plead guilty

Arrested in October 2020 after being placed under house arrest for many months in her Hanoi residence, the blogger refused to plead guilty and will no doubt appeal. Her lawyer, Ngo Anh Tuan, wrote on her Facebook page on Monday that Trang told her on October 19, during her first meeting with one of her defenders since her incarceration, that she had always refused to "confess" to her. during the dozen interrogations that were inflicted on him.

"During some of these sessions, the investigators asked her if she would agree to leave Vietnam and live in a foreign country. But it has always refused to serve as bargaining chip with a foreign government," writes the lawyer.

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Pham Doan Trang is a journalist, writer and blogger known and celebrated internationally for her protest writing. She is the co-founder of the blog "Journal de la loi" and in 2017 published her ninth book, *Policies of a Police State*. His blog is consulted by about twenty thousand visitors. Trang is also one of the founders of Nha xuất bản Tự Do editions – which means "Liberal publishing house" – and whose work was rewarded in 2020 with the Voltaire prize from the International Publishers Association.