

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER BEATEN IN PRISON

A Vietnamese human rights defender, Ho Thi Bich Khuong, currently serving a five-year prison term for “conducting propaganda” against the state, has been beaten by a group of prisoners. She is said to be seriously injured and in urgent need of medical care.

Ho Thi Bich Khuong is imprisoned at K4 prison’s Camp 5, in Viet Nam’s Thanh Hoa province. On 4 November, four prisoners reportedly beat her around her face, stomach and genital area. The incident occurred during the early evening, when the prison guards were not present. Ho Thi Bich Khuong is reportedly badly bruised and has acute stomach pain. She also has a broken arm from an earlier beating, for which she did not receive any treatment. She is currently in a critical condition in the prison clinic. The reason for the assault is not known.

Ho Thi Bich Khuong has been an outspoken and peaceful activist for social justice since the mid-1980’s, when the authorities evicted her and other stall holders from Cho Chua market in Nam Dan district, Nghe An province. She received no compensation, cutting off her only source of income. Despite repeated intimidation and harassment, including arrest and imprisonment, she has submitted countless complaints to the local and national authorities about her and others’ cases. She has written a blog and published accounts of human rights violations against the rural poor, and the harassment of her family and others. She has also taken part in protests about land rights and is a supporter of Bloc 8406, a movement calling for democracy and human rights.

Ho Thi Bich Khuong was arrested in December 2010 for giving interviews critical of the government to foreign media, and distributing “anti-government” documents. On 29 December 2011, Nghe An Provincial People’s Court sentenced her to five years’ imprisonment and three years’ probation on release for “conducting propaganda” against the state under Article 88 of Viet Nam’s Penal Code. Her sentence was upheld at an appeal hearing on 30 May 2012. She is a prisoner of conscience.

Please write immediately in Vietnamese, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately provide adequate medical treatment to Ho Thi Bich Khuong, including hospitalization if necessary.
- Demanding that the authorities conduct a thorough, independent and prompt investigation into the incident – bringing those responsible to justice – and take action to prevent such incidents happening in the future.
- Urging that Ho Thi Bich Khuong, a prisoner of conscience, is released immediately and unconditionally.
- Urging the authorities to improve prison conditions in Viet Nam to meet the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 JANUARY 2012 TO:

Prime Minister

Nguyen Tan Dung
Government Office
1 Hoang Hoa Tham Street
Ba Dinh District, Ha Noi
VIET NAM

Fax: 022 84 80 44130 -OR- 011 84 80 44940

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Public Security

Lt Gen Tran Dai Quang
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street
Hoan Kiem District, Ha Noi
VIET NAM

Fax: 011 844 3942 0223

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pham Binh Minh
Minister of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh District, Ha Noi,
VIET NAM

Fax: 011 844 3823 1872

Email: bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to:

Ambassador H.E. NGUYEN QUOC CUONG
Embassy of Vietnam, 1233 20th St NW Suite 400, Washington DC 20036
Tel: 1 202 861 0737 or 1 202 716 8666 | Fax: 1 202 861 0917 | Email: info@vietnamembassy.us -OR- vnconsular@vietnamembassy.us

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ho Thi Bich Khuong has been imprisoned before for her activism. In May 2005, the People's Court of Ba Dinh District, Ha Noi, sentenced her to six months' imprisonment for "disturbing public order" under article 245 of Viet Nam's Penal Code. In April 2007, she was arrested at an internet cafe while reading news from foreign sources. The People's Court of Nam Dan District, Nghe An province, sentenced her to two years in prison for "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state" under article 258 of the Penal Code. She wrote a prison diary, published after her release in 2009, which gives a daily account of the harsh treatment that she faced in prison.

Following her conviction in December 2011, Ho Thi Bich Khuong was also reportedly beaten and denied proper medical treatment at Nghi Kim detention center, Nghe An province, where she was held before being moved to K4 Camp 5, Thanh Hoa province in July 2012. Her injuries included a broken arm.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are generally harsh, with poor food and limited health care. According to a former prisoner of conscience, political prisoners are subjected to a policy of isolation, which makes them vulnerable to ill treatment by the guards as well as other prisoners.

Name: Ho Thi Bich Khuong (f)

Issue: Prisoner of conscience, Health concern

UA: 344/12

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Country: Viet Nam