

URGENT ACTION

DEATH THREAT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AND FAMILY

Human rights lawyer Lê Quốc Quân has received warnings from Việt Nam's Ministry of Public Security officials that he and his family could be killed if he meets with visiting foreign dignitaries. They are under surveillance and at risk of being assaulted, injured or killed.

Lê Quốc Quân was followed by four plain-clothed individuals when he left his home in Ha Noi, capital city of Việt Nam, to accompany his 15-year-old daughter to register for her examinations at school on the morning of 8 June 2017. Upon completion of the registration, Lê Quốc Quân and his daughter travelled to his office where they were confronted by an official, believed to be a Captain from the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and surrounded by approximately eight men.

Lê Quốc Quân was told that he had been warned not to attend meetings with foreign dignitaries without permission and that if he did so again, he and his three daughters could be killed. His daughter began recording the warning on her phone but the phone was seized by one of the men confronting her father. When Lê Quốc Quân attempted to come to her aid, he was pushed, physically restrained, and choked with his own clothing. The MPS official placed a hand under Lê Quốc Quân's chin and told him that he could end his life with one movement. The official then suggested that Lê Quốc Quân and his family could be killed in a fire from a vehicle explosion or that his daughters could be harmed if he did not watch out for them.

A week before the incident, on 31 May 2017, Lê Quốc Quân had met with a visiting delegation of United States Senators from the Senate Armed Services Committee. Prior to the meeting, Lê Quốc Quân received a text message from an MPS official, believed to have the rank of Major, warning him not to attend. Apparently as a consequence of ignoring the warning, his movements were closely monitored, culminating in the confrontation on 8 June.

Physical assaults on human rights defenders and their family members are common in Việt Nam. Throughout 2016 and 2017, scores of activists have been assaulted in the streets by police and/or men in plain clothes, often left bleeding and injured.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Immediately cease harassment of Lê Quốc Quân and his family members;
- Respect and uphold the rights of Lê Quốc Quân and his family to freedom of movement, association, and expression as provided for under human rights treaties which are binding on Việt Nam;
- Order an independent and effective investigation into the threats made against Lê Quốc Quân and his family.

Contact these two officials by 3 August, 2017:

Prime Minister
 Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
 Prime Minister's Office
 Hà Nội, Việt Nam
 Email: nguoiphatngonchinhphu@chinhphu.vn
 Salutation: Your Excellency

Ambassador H.E. Pham Quang Vinh, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
 1233 20th St NW Suite 400, Washington DC 20036
 Fax: 1 202 861 0917 | Phone: 1 202 861 0737
 Email: info@vietnamembassy.us
 Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lê Quốc Quân is one of Việt Nam's best known dissidents. He has been a prominent campaigner for democracy and human rights issues in Việt Nam for a number of years. He wrote a popular blog exposing corruption and human rights abuses. As a result, he has been a frequent target of harassment by the authorities, and has been arrested several times before. Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience in 2007 when he was detained for three months for supposed anti-government activities.

On 27 December 2012, Lê Quốc Quân was arrested for alleged tax evasion and, on 2 October 2013, he was sentenced to 30 months in prison on charges described by Amnesty International as trumped up and politically motivated. Despite receiving international attention from the United Nations, foreign governments, and international human rights organizations, Lê Quốc Quân's conviction was upheld on 18 February 2014.

Human rights defenders are regularly threatened and attacked in Việt Nam. Amnesty International is unaware of any cases where those suspected to be responsible for such attacks have been prosecuted despite the fact that the attacks are often carried out in broad daylight and often in full view of numerous witnesses. In July 2016, Amnesty International called for an investigation into three incidents that month in which political activists, human rights defenders, and their relatives were deliberately injured while riding motorbikes (see ASA 41/4533/2016).

Human rights defenders invited to meet with foreign diplomats and/or visiting foreign delegations are often prevented from doing so by restrictions on their freedom of movement and tight surveillance. Human rights lawyer Nguyễn Văn Đài was arrested on 16 December 2015 on his way to meet with a European Union delegation that was taking part in the regular EU- Việt Nam human rights dialogue in Ha Noi. He remains in pre-trial detention.

Việt Nam is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. However, these rights are severely restricted in law and practice in Việt Nam. Vaguely worded articles in the national security section of Việt Nam's 1999 Penal Code are frequently used to criminalize dissent. Those at risk include people advocating for peaceful political change, criticizing government policies, or calling for respect for human rights.

Name: Lê Quốc Quân

Gender: male

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