



The Benenson Society

### Campaign for Vietnamese bloggers

Human Rights Watch recently posted list of more than 100 people imprisoned for political or religious reasons. The list is made up of people imprisoned in Vietnam for expressing critical views of the government, taking part in peaceful protests, participating in religious groups not approved by the authorities, or joining civil or political organizations that the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam deems threats to its monopoly on power. This list only includes people who have been convicted and remain in prison and does not include the significant number of detainees who have been arrested, are currently facing trial, and have not yet been convicted

With the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Da Nang on November 10, 2017, and the visit of President Trump it is an opportune time to highlight the human rights situation in Vietnam.

Two individuals might be highlighted as faces of the prisoners in Vietnam. On October 25, in the most recent sentencing, a 24-year-old student blogger, **Phan Kim Khanh**, was sentenced to six years in prison for “conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.”



Phan Kim Khanh



Tran Thi Xuan

The charge of “national security” crimes are used to quash free speech. Thus, on October 17, the police charged an environmental activist, **Tran Thi Xuan**, with activities aimed at overthrowing the government.

Human Rights Watch observes that:

*“Vietnamese rights bloggers and activists face police harassment, intimidation, intrusive surveillance, detention, and interrogation on a daily basis. Many are denounced on state media and national television, and others are subjected to public criticism in their neighborhoods. Police frequently prohibit rights campaigners from leaving the country or place them under temporary house arrest to prevent them from joining a protest or meeting with foreign diplomats. Activists have faced increasing numbers of beatings and assaults by men in civilian clothes operating under the protection of the authorities. Vietnamese activists who are arrested are often placed in lengthy police detention before their trial, without access to legal assistance or family visits”.*

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Please contact your local Vietnamese diplomatic representatives asking them to forward your concerns or write directly to the President of Vietnam.

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The Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Nguyen Xuan Phuc

35 Ngo Quyen Hoang Hoa Tham

Hanoi

Viet Nam

Dear Prime Minister,

As a member of the Benenson Society I respectfully raise my concerns about the recent detention by your Government of two young bloggers, **Phan Kim Khanh** and **Tran Thi Xuan**. The exercise of free and critical speech is fundamental to respect for human rights in any society. Young people writing

about democracy, corruption and the environment should not be silenced by lengthy sentences. Please intervene on their behalf.

At a time when the eyes of the world are on Vietnam with the APEC summit and Vietnam's growing reputation as an economic power and tourist location, we join other human rights bodies in calling on your Government to end the government's systematic persecution of peaceful critics and ensure the basic rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and religion for its citizens.

Yours sincerely,

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