

Vietnam: Stop any Ongoing Criminal Proceedings and Ban against Huynh Thuc Vy

(Bangkok, 14 August 2018) – We, the undersigned civil society organisations, condemn the unlawful house arrest and investigation of Huynh Thuc Vy, a prominent Vietnamese blogger and founder of Vietnamese Women for Human Rights (VNWHR). She was taken into custody on 9 August, based on allegations of having violated Article 276 of the 1999 Criminal Code, which criminalises desecration of the Vietnamese national flag.

Huynh Thuc Vy was released the same day late at night, after having been questioned by the authorities for ten hours. After her release, the authorities also imposed a travel ban and house arrest on her.

The signatories call on the Vietnamese authorities to stop any ongoing criminal proceedings against her unconditionally, and to lift both her travel ban and house arrest, as all are unjustified politically motivated measures.

Huynh Thuc Vy is a prominent online blogger, who advocates for human rights, particularly women and minorities rights. She has publicly denounced the Vietnamese regime and its communist symbols, including the current Vietnamese flag.

In the past weeks, the authorities have issued five summonses for police interrogations to Huynh Thuc Vy. She refused to comply with the summonses, as she does not consider them legitimate given the repressive climate surrounding human rights activism within the country.

Around 30 officers, including plainclothes, came to Huynh Thuc Vy's home showing the sixth summons and forcibly took her for interrogation. Later, having the search warrant, the authorities searched her house and confiscated her personal belongings, including a laptop, camera, mobile phone, and books. The house was heavily monitored by the authorities, who did not allow anyone, except Huynh Thuc Vy's husband, to enter the house during the search.

The harassment of Huynh Thuc Vy is another example of politically motivated measures that the Vietnamese authorities have been using against peaceful dissidents and human rights defenders.

The signatories remind the Government of Vietnam of its obligations to guarantee the full enjoyment of the right to the freedom of opinion and expression guaranteed under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a signatory. This fundamental right is also protected under Article 25 of the Vietnamese Constitution. The Vietnamese authorities should refrain from any harassment or intimidation of its own population.

The signatories call on the Vietnamese authorities to stop ongoing criminal proceedings against Huynh Thuc Vy, and lift both her ban and house arrest. The signatories also call on the Vietnamese Government to amend the Criminal Code 2015, which includes several criminal offences that are vaguely worded and are therefore open many interpretations, which can be used against the dissidents and rights defenders. We express hope that the Government of Vietnam can open itself up for criticism, and engage with civil society.

Signatories:

ALTSEAN-Burma

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Indonesia

Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), Indonesia

Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), Indonesia

Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP), Timor Leste

Korean House for International Solidarity (KHIS), South Korea

People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF), Thailand

Peoples Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), South Korea

Progressive Voice (PV), Myanmar

Pusat KOMAS, Malaysia

Solidarity for ASEAN People's Advocacy (SAPA)

The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodia

Think Centre, Singapore

Vietnamese Women for Human Rights (VNWHR), Vietnam

Yayasan Sekretariat Anak Merdeka (SAMIN), Indonesia