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Vietnamese Lawyer and Blogger Le Quoc Quan on Hunger Strike
Appeal trial scheduled for 18 February 2014



Jailed Vietnamese blogger and human rights lawyer Le Quoc Quan has launched a hunger strike to protest the refusal by prison authorities to provide him access to legal counsel, access to legal and religious books, and access to a priest for spiritual guidance, ahead of his appeal trial on 18 February 2014 in Hanoi. Le Quoc Quan has been imprisoned since 27 December 2012.

In 2013, the detention of Le Quoc Quan was condemned by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as a violation of his right to freedom of expression and his right to a fair trial. It found that Le Quoc Quan had been targeted for his work as a lawyer and a blogger and called for his immediate release or for his conviction to be reviewed by an independent court. It also recommended that Viet Nam pays damages to Le Quoc Quan for his arbitrary detention. The government of Viet Nam has yet to respond to this decision.

A broad coalition of NGO's and networks from around the world call on the government of Viet Nam to comply with the decision of the United Nations Working Group and release Le Quoc Quan immediately: Media Legal Defence Initiative, Media Defence-Southeast Asia, Lawyers for Lawyers, Avocats Sans Frontières, Front Line Defenders, Access, English PEN, Reporters Without Borders, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, ARTICLE 19, Index on Censorship, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, the National Endowment for Democracy, the World Movement for Democracy, the Electronic Frontier Foundation and PEN International. They concluded that the conviction and ongoing detention of Le Quoc Quan are arbitrary and violate his internationally protected rights to liberty, timely access to legal counsel and a fair trial. The UN Working Group stated that "the real purpose of the detention and prosecution might eventually be to punish him for exercising his rights [to freedom of expression] and to deter others from doing so."

ENGLISH
PEN



Notes to editors:

- Le Quoc Quan was arrested on 27 December 2012 on baseless charges of tax evasion. Following his arrest, he was held incommunicado and denied permission to see his lawyer for two months. Repeated requests by his family to visit him were also denied. Mr Quan first saw a family member at his trial on 2 October 2013, at which he was convicted of evading corporate income tax and sentenced to 30 months imprisonment and a fine of 1.2 billion dong (approximately USD 59,000). He has appealed this decision.
- The government of Viet Nam has long persecuted Le Quoc Quan for his human rights work. In 2007, after representing numerous victims of human rights violations, he was disbarred from practicing as a lawyer on suspicion of engaging in “activities to overthrow the regime”. He has been arrested several times for continuing his human rights advocacy. Following an attack by unknown assailants in August 2012, he was hospitalised. The attack was never investigated by the police.
- The decision of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention can be downloaded from the website of the Media Legal Defence Initiative by [clicking here](#).

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