

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

*NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them*

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SUMMARY OF INTERNET FREEDOM FESTIVAL – VIET NAM CYBER DIALOGUE 2.0

Valencia, Spain
March 3-6, 2018

by
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Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) was invited to participate in the 2nd annual Viet Nam Cyber Dialogue (VCD), a side-event of the Internet Freedom Festival (IFF) aimed at discussing ongoing issues in Viet Nam related to digital security, the crackdown on freedom of expression, and the threats against human rights defenders and advocates. Joshua Lam, the Viet Nam Monitor for LRWC attended. The VCD was hosted by Viet Tan, and co-sponsored by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Article 19, and Radio-Free Asia. The main agenda for the event was to:

- a. Outline the current landscape and situation in Viet Nam
- b. Discuss ongoing issues, particularly with respect to the ongoing crackdown on freedom of expression and the media.
- c. Outline the various tactics and tools that groups in and outside of Viet Nam are using to resist and disrupt the State's ongoing crackdown and censorship work.

The VCD was a thematic aspect of the IFF as a whole, with speakers and topics ranging from frontline defenders using tech tools to circumvent state surveillance and internet censorship measures, to international NGOs working to use UN Special Procedures mechanisms to advocate for human rights defenders that are being arbitrarily detained and threatened.

With respect to LRWC work, it was clear that there were ongoing campaigns and interventions that LRWC will continue to be a valued contributor to. This includes:

- Continuing to support the #StopTheCrackdownVN campaign, which is set to launch a standalone website, complete with case histories for the majority of the arrested/detained activists. LRWC will be able to provide input and quality assurance towards posts on the website, and also be able to draw from the information listed there for future campaigns
- Continuing to work with the coalition of NGOs on the ongoing cases of imprisoned activists, most notably the human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai.
- Working with a select group of legal-focused NGOs to bring additional complaints to the UN Special Procedures mechanisms, in order to have additional, high-level interventions by specialist UN Working Groups and Special Rapporteurs.
- Participating with the NGO coalition to prepare for and raise awareness of the upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2019 for Viet Nam. In addition, need to work with

the coalition to ensure high-quality civil society organization (CSO) submissions to the UPR. And to strategize about targeted lobbying trips to key countries (Canada, USA, UK, Australia, EU, etc.) with respect to pushing for particular recommendations to be put forward at the UPR.

- Preparing for the review by the UN Human Rights Committee of Viet Nam's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in June 2019.
- Building a growing network of groups and individuals who are working on issues related to Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Viet Nam (ABA, RSF, Article 19, Media Legal Defense Initiative, Viet Tan, etc)
- Connecting with the individuals involved in Canadian Bar Association projects with Vietnam (Viet Nam Bar Federation Capacity Building Project and the National Legislation Project of Viet Nam).
- Looking for other 'soft' entry points into Viet Nam to build engagement in issues of digital security and building human rights protections.
- Researching into new 'cybersecurity' laws, as well as the growing list of criminal code provisions aimed at diminishing free speech (and reducing the role of lawyers). Need to get a copy of proposed amendments to Penal Code. Need to also get a copy of the Viet Nam Constitution, for possible avenues of strategic litigation

Overall, it was a fantastic event, full of inspirational activists, programmers, lawyers, and other individuals who are focused on trying to assist the people of Viet Nam that are working for the betterment of their country and for better and safer tools for the people doing the front line work.

In addition to the VCD portion of the work, a number of sessions of the IFF were also attended, including:

- The Digital Rights Space
- Using Litigation to defend privacy in South America
- Current events in Internet Freedom in Southeast Asia

A summary of the different VCD sessions is forthcoming and will be shared when its received.

March 15, 2018