

Sentencing of environmental human rights defenders in Viet Nam

From

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Location

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The arrest, detention, and sentencing of human rights defenders in Viet Nam who advocate for the environment and the country's transition to clean-energy use raises serious concerns not only with respect to the charges levelled against them but also the conduct of their trials.

Yesterday, Hoang Thi Minh Hong became the fifth of six environmental human rights defenders arrested from 2021 to 2023 to be sentenced. She has been prosecuted on tax evasion charges, which appear to be “politically motivated”, according to [UN independent experts](#). After a trial lasting just three hours, Hong was sentenced to three years imprisonment and fined USD 4,100. Her access to a defence counsel and her family has been limited throughout her detention.

Four other environmental rights advocates have been prosecuted on similar charges and sentenced to up to five years imprisonment, in what seems to be a wider crackdown on environmental rights defenders and against civic space in Viet Nam. The charges levelled against the sixth person are still unknown.

Arrests of environmental human rights defenders are taking place amid Viet Nam's implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership. We reiterate that, to achieve the goal of a just and sustainable transition to green energy, human rights defenders and environmental organizations must be able to participate freely and actively in shaping climate and environmental policies and decision-making.

These prosecutions and the arbitrary application of restrictive legislation are having a chilling effect on the critically important work of environmental defenders, and that of other human rights defenders in Viet Nam. This issue has also been highlighted in the 2023 Secretary General's report on intimidation and reprisals, as well as by UN Human Rights Mechanisms, including Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, Treaty Bodies, and the Universal Periodic Review.

We call to the Government of Viet Nam to refrain from using criminal charges to curtail the exercise of fundamental freedoms and to release unconditionally all those who have been detained in such cases. We also remind the authorities of their obligations under international law to respect the rule of law, the right to a fair trial, and ensuring judicial independence.