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Vietnam: End Persecution of Human Rights Activist

Trinh Ba Phuong Faces Further Imprisonment for Criticizing Party
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(Bangkok) – The Vietnamese authorities should immediately release the prominent human rights activist Trinh Ba Phuong and drop all charges against him, Human Rights Watch said today.

In April 2025, the authorities in Quang Nam province charged Trinh Ba Phuong under article 117 of the penal code with anti-state propaganda. He was already serving a 10-year prison sentence under article 117 for criticizing the Vietnamese government, when in November 2024 he created signs in prison saying, “Down with the Communist [Party of] Vietnam for violating human rights (*Đa đao công sản Việt Nam vi phạm nhân quyền*).” He is currently being held incommunicado pending further investigation.



Trinh Ba Phuong.

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“Trinh Ba Phuong is already serving an outrageous prison sentence for expressing views the Vietnamese government doesn’t like,” said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “By imposing yet another draconian charge against him, the Vietnamese authorities are demonstrating the absurd lengths to which they’ll go to trample on freedom of expression.”

Trinh Ba Phuong, 40, comes from a family of land rights activists. During the first two decades of the 21st century, he joined his mother, father, and younger brother in numerous protests and campaigns in support of human rights, land rights, and environmental protection.

In June 2020, Trinh Ba Phuong was arrested and charged with anti-state propaganda under article 117, which criminalizes “making, storing, disseminating or propagandizing information, materials, and products that aim to oppose the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” Prior to his arrest, he was instrumental in amplifying the voices of farmers in Hanoi’s Dong Tam commune, where a police raid in January 2020

left an 84-year-old farmer, Le Dinh Kinh, and three policemen dead. Trinh Ba Phuong was one of the authors of the “[Dong Tam Report](#),” which shed light on [the violent land clash](#).

In December 2021, a court in Hanoi [convicted and sentenced him](#) to 10 years in prison, from which he has continued to advocate for human rights, including by engaging in hunger strikes to protest the appalling conditions. In November 2024, he carried out [a hunger strike](#) at An Diem prison in Quang Nam province for more than 20 days to protest the prison guards’ confiscation of books, paper, and pens.

Trinh Ba Phuong’s family has endured repeated harassment by the police, intimidation, [house arrest](#), and [physical assaults](#).

Trinh Ba Phuong’s mother, [Can Thi Theu](#), and younger brother, [Trinh Ba Tu](#), are both serving 8-year-prison sentences, also on charges of anti-state propaganda. This is the third time that Can Thi Theu has served a prison sentence for advocating for human rights. In March, [a Facebook post](#) said she told her husband, Trinh Ba Khiem, during a visit that her prison cellmate had threatened to kill her if she continued to file grievances.

Trinh Ba Khiem is also a former political prisoner. He was convicted and sentenced to 14 months in prison in 2014 for campaigning for land rights.

In April 2025, police summoned Trinh Ba Khiem and the couple’s daughter Trinh Thi Thao for interrogation because they have continued to campaign for the release of their relatives. That month, police put Trinh Ba Phuong’s wife, Do Thi Thu, under intrusive surveillance prior to and during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam.

“The Vietnamese authorities for many years have subjected Trinh Ba Phuong’s entire family to persecution for refusing to stay silent in the face of injustice,” Gossman said. “Vietnam’s international trade partners and donors should publicly urge the Vietnamese government to release Trinh Ba Phuong, Trinh Ba Tu, and Can Thi Theu, and immediately end its abusive campaign against this family of activists.”

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