

Vietnam: Free Journalist Arrested for Dissent

Blogger Nguyen Vu Binh Prosecuted for Promoting Rights, Democracy



[Click to expand Image](#)

***Update:** On September 10, 2024, a court in Hanoi sentenced Nguyen Vu Binh to seven years in prison.*

(Bangkok) – The [Vietnamese](#) authorities should immediately drop all charges and release the prominent blogger Nguyen Vu Binh, Human Rights Watch said today.

Hanoi police arrested Nguyen Vu Binh, 55, on February 29, 2024, for expressing views critical of the Communist Party of Vietnam. He was charged with conducting propaganda against the state under article 117 of the penal code. A Hanoi court is scheduled to hear his case on September 10. If convicted, he faces up to 12 years in prison.

“Nguyen Vu Binh has tirelessly campaigned for human rights and democracy in Vietnam for more than two decades,” said [Patricia Gossman](#), associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “His peaceful expression of political dissent is not a crime and the case against him should be dropped.”

Nguyen Vu Binh’s trial is the eighth since [To Lam](#) took office as general secretary of Vietnam’s Communist Party. To Lam served as head of Vietnam’s notorious Ministry of Public Security between April 2016 and May 2024, during which time the Vietnamese police arrested at least 269 people for peacefully exercising their basic civil and political rights. In August and September, Vietnamese authorities convicted and sentenced at least seven human rights campaigners, including [Nguyen Chi Tuyen](#), Tran Minh Loi, Le Phu Tuan, Phan Dinh Sang, Tran Van Khanh, Phan Ngoc Dung, and Bui Van Khang to prison terms for criticizing the government.

Nguyen Vu Binh worked as a journalist at the official Communist Party of Vietnam’s journal, Communist Review (Tap Chi Cong San), for almost 10 years. In December 2000, he resigned and attempted to form an independent political party. He was also one of several dissidents who attempted to form an anti-corruption association in 2001.

Police arrested him in September 2002, alleging that he had slandered the Vietnamese state in written testimony he provided to the United States Congress in July 2002 on human rights abuses in Vietnam. The government also targeted him for his criticism of a controversial border treaty with China in an article distributed online in August 2002.

In his US congressional [testimony](#), Nguyen Vu Binh wrote, “I always believe that when we can successfully stop and prevent human rights violations across the country we have also succeeded in democratizing this nation. Any measures to fight for human rights, therefore, should also aim for the ultimate goals aspired to for so long by the Vietnamese people: individual liberty and a democratic society.”

In December 2003, a court sentenced Nguyen Vu Binh to seven years in prison, followed by three years of house arrest, for espionage under article 80 of Vietnam’s criminal law. In June 2007, two years and three months early, the authorities released him. He immediately resumed his human rights advocacy, frequently commenting on social and political issues in Vietnam.

Between 2015 and 2024, Nguyen Vu Binh published more than 300 entries on the [Radio Free Asia Blog](#). He has written about corruption, land rights, police brutality, unfair trials, the right to peaceful protest, economics, education, the environment, and the relationships between Vietnam and China and China and the US. He has written to support imprisoned fellow activists, including Le Anh Hung, [Nguyen Thuy Hanh](#), and members of [Brotherhood for Democracy](#). But most of all, Nguyen Vu Binh has written to promote genuine democracy and rule of law in Vietnam.

In his [latest entry](#), “Positive Aspects of the Democratic Movement During a Difficult and Gloomy Period,” published a week before his arrest, he said that human rights and democracy advocates in Vietnam should support one another and the families of fellow activists amid the ongoing government crackdown.

Nguyen Vu Binh twice received the prestigious Hellmann/Hammett writers’ award for victims of political persecution, in [2002](#) and [2007](#).

“It’s absurd that the Vietnamese government – which monopolizes all media and ensures that they publish only what the government wants to hear – cannot take a word of criticism from a lone independent voice like Nguyen Vu Binh,” Gossman said. “When will Vietnam’s leaders learn to tolerate dissenting voices, and when will countries with close ties to Vietnam speak out about the oppression there?”