

Human Rights Watch

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Reverse Conviction Against Mother Mushroom Ahead of Human Rights Dialogue

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Vietnamese political prisoners Private

(Brussels) The [European Union](#) should press the [Vietnamese](#) government to release all political prisoners and detainees; end repression of freedom of speech, association, and assembly; and take steps to end [police brutality](#), Human Rights Watch said today. The EU and Vietnam will hold their [7th annual bilateral human rights dialogue in Hanoi](#) on December 1, 2017.

The Vietnamese authorities have previously used the occasion of the human rights dialogue to target activists. In December 2015, prominent [human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai was arrested](#) on his way to meet the EU delegation in Hanoi during the 5th EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue. He remains in detention awaiting trial. In November 2017, police detained and interrogated rights activists [Nguyen Quang A, Pham Doan Trang, and Bui Thi Minh Hang](#) after they met with an EU delegation.

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[Special Feature](#)

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The EU should publicly press Vietnam to release Nguyen Van Dai and all other political prisoners, and amend its penal code so that it is impossible for Communist Party-controlled courts to imprison critics, said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director. This dialogue should lead to concrete commitments on rights and not just be yet another talk shop.

The Communist Party of Vietnam presides over a one-party state that severely limits basic freedoms and punishes dissent. The government frequently uses vaguely worded and loosely interpreted provisions in its penal code and other laws [to punish peaceful political and religious dissidents](#). At present, [at least 105 peaceful critics](#) are serving lengthy prison terms for expressing critical views of the government, taking parts in peaceful protests, participating in religious groups disapproved by the authorities, or joining civil or political organizations that the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam deems as threats to its monopoly on power. Dozens of [others have been arrested and charged](#) with similar violations.

Vietnam bans all independent political parties, labor unions, and human rights organizations. Religious groups can only operate under government management. The government monitors, harasses, and sometimes violently cracks down on religious groups that operate outside of official, government-registered, and government-controlled religious institutions.

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Brad Adams

Asia Director

The police use various means to curb political activism, including physical and psychological harassment, intrusive surveillance, extrajudicial house arrest, and the application of pressure on employers, landlords, and family members of activists. In November, police pressured a landlord [to evict dissident singer Nguyen Do Mai Khoi](#) after she publicly protested against the US president during his visit to Hanoi.

Domestic restrictions on freedom of movement are used to prevent bloggers and activists from participating in public events such as [pro-environment protests](#), [human rights discussions](#), and [meetings with foreign diplomats](#), or [attending trials of fellow activists](#).

[Physical assaults against rights bloggers and campaigners](#) occur frequently. Many victims have reported that unknown men in civilian clothes beat them in the presence of uniformed police who did nothing to intervene. Police often subject rights campaigners to lengthy, bullying interrogation sessions and detain them for long periods without access to legal counsel and family visits.

On November 30, the day before the EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue starts, a higher court will hear the appeal case of prominent blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, also known as Mother Mushroom. Nguyen was [sentenced to 10 years in prison](#) by the Peoples Court of Khanh Hoa in June 2017 for calling for democracy and criticizing Vietnams authorities. On November 26, the Bar Association of Phu Yen province announced its decision to disbar one of Nguyens lawyers, Vo An Don, for abusing freedom of speech, producing many articles, video clips, speeches and giving interviews to foreign newspapers and foreign entities, making up stories to denigrate lawyers and judicial offices, the Party and the State of Vietnam. [He] aimed to stir, propagandize and distort the truth, which seriously blackened the prestige of the Party, the State, judicial offices and Vietnamese lawyers.

The EU should publicly honor brave Vietnamese citizens like Mother Mushroom and her lawyer, who take great risks for rights and democracy, said Adams. They should make it clear that closer ties will be dependent on the release of all political prisoners and the end of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders.

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Movement Restrictions on Rights Activists in Vietnam

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