

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/11/03/vietnam-release-all-political-prisoners>

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Over 100 Behind Bars with World Leaders to Attend APEC Summit

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Rights bloggers and activists in Ho Chi Minh City during a hunger strike to call for freedom of political prisoners, July 2015.
2015 Dan Lam Bao

(New York, November 3, 2017) The [Vietnamese](#) government should immediately release everyone it has detained or imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch posted a new [web page highlighting the cases of 15](#) of more than 100 people imprisoned for political or religious reasons.

International leaders and trade partners attending the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Da Nang on November 10, 2017, should call on Vietnamese authorities to end the governments systematic persecution of peaceful critics and ensure the basic rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and religion for its citizens.

While doing photo-ops and trade deals with the leaders of Vietnams one-party state, foreign officials in the country for APEC should not turn a blind eye to the over 100 political prisoners those very same leaders have put behind bars, said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director. At the same time that Vietnam is playing the role of a friendly host to welcome international delegations, the authorities are intensifying their crackdown on anyone with the courage to speak up for human rights and democracy.

More than 100 political prisoners are currently locked up simply for exercising their basic rights.

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Since its formation in 1976, the modern, unified Vietnamese state has imprisoned people for the exercise of basic freedoms. At present, at least 105 peaceful critics (list below) are in prison for expressing critical views of the government, taking part in peaceful protests, participating in religious groups that dont have the authorities approval, or joining civil or political organizations that the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam deem threats to its monopoly on power.

On October 25, in the most recent sentencing, [the Peoples Court of Thai Nguyen sentenced 24-year-old student blogger Phan Kim Khanh to six years in prison](#) for conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Upon release, he will serve an additional four years of probation restricting his movement to his residential ward. The verdict should be quashed and Phan Kim Khanh should be immediately released, Human Rights Watch said.

Neither a glittering APEC summit nor new trade deals can cover up the ugly reality that Vietnam still runs a police state that brooks no dissent.

Brad Adams

Asia Director

Within the past 12 months, the police have arrested at least 28 people for sweeping national security offenses that are used to punish critical speech. The most recent arrest was on October 17, when the police detained an environmental activist, Tran Thi Xuan, in Ha Tinh province and charged her with activities aimed at overthrowing the government.

Vietnamese rights bloggers and activists face police harassment, intimidation, intrusive surveillance, detention, and interrogation on a daily basis. Many are denounced on state media and national television, and others are subjected to public criticism in their neighborhoods. Police frequently prohibit rights campaigners from leaving the country or place them under temporary house arrest to prevent them from joining a protest or meeting with foreign diplomats. Activists have faced increasing numbers of [beatings and assaults by men in civilian clothes](#) operating under the protection of the authorities. Vietnamese activists who are arrested are often placed in lengthy police detention before their trial, without access to [legal assistance](#) or family visits.

Neither a glittering APEC summit nor new trade deals can cover up the ugly reality that Vietnam still runs a police state that brooks no dissent, Adams said. Any leader of a democracy who goes to APEC but doesnt take up the cause of Vietnams political prisoners should be ashamed at missing the opportunity to do the right thing on a global stage. International donors and trade partners should press Vietnam for systemic change to a more democratic system that respects human rights and the rule of law.

Human Rights Watch List of Political Prisoners October 2017

The following is a list of people imprisoned in Vietnam for expressing critical views of the government, taking part in peaceful protests, participating in religious groups not approved by the authorities, or joining civil or political organizations that the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam deems threats to its monopoly on power. This list only includes people who have been convicted and remain in prison and does not include the significant number of detainees who have been arrested, are currently facing trial, and have not yet been convicted. It is also almost certainly incomplete, as it only includes convictions that Human Rights Watch has been able to document.

Due to difficulties in obtaining information about convictions and sentences in Vietnam, this list may differ from those compiled by other organizations, and such differences do not necessarily reflect inaccuracies. Vietnam should be urged to open its legal system including case files and proceedings to public scrutiny.

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Movement Restrictions on Rights Activists in Vietnam

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