

# Human Rights Watch

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

**<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/27/vietnamese-activist-sentenced-9-years-one-day-trial>**

## Campaign and Advocacy

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A Chilling Warning to Supporters and Dissidents

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A Vietnam court [sentenced](#) activist Tran Thi Nga on Tuesday to nine years in prison followed by five years under house arrest for spreading anti-State propaganda. The conviction was handed down during a one-day trial a swift and harsh verdict her lawyer [called](#) predetermined. Security officers barred Tran Thi Ngas husband and children from the court, along with supporters and independent journalists.

Vietnam has [long used](#) vague national security laws to punish critics and stifle dissent. Yet recently the governments response has grown increasingly severe, with [extreme prison sentences](#) and tighter online restrictions.

Tran Thi Nga, also known as Thuy Nga, was [arrested](#) in January for sharing articles and videos online highlighting ongoing rights abuses tied to environmental crises and political corruption. According to [state media](#), she was indicted for defaming the administration and spreading reactionary ideas.

On the internet, Tran Thi Nga an outspoken critic of police brutality, land grabbing, and labor abuses had connected with a far-reaching community of like-minded activists and supporters. Her conviction comes one month after blogger [Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh](#), or Mother Mushroom, was sentenced to 10 years in prison under the same penal code offense, article 88. As social media fosters a growing pro-democracy forum in Vietnam, the government has ramped up its crackdown on online activity, [blocking](#) Facebook during large-scale protests and [pressuring](#) multinationals to back censorship.

[Tran Thi Nga after being assaulted in Hanoi on May 25, 2014.](#)

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Tran Thi Nga after being assaulted in Hanoi on May 25, 2014. 2014 Private/Dan Lam Bao

For a decade, Tran Thi Nga has carried out her fight against injustice despite government intimidation and assault. In August 2015, she was [dragged from a bus](#) and beaten by plainclothes police after visiting a recently released political prisoner. A May 2014 [targeted attack](#) by five men on the street in Hanoi left her with a broken arm and leg. Yet she was unyielding, continuing to [speak out](#) against the assaults and broader [state violence](#).

Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, both prominent figures within activist networks, campaigned regularly for political prisoners throughout the country. Over 100 are currently imprisoned for exercising their basic freedoms.

The two womens sentences serve as retribution for their independence, leadership, and solidarity. But as a threat to other rights defenders, they seem unlikely to have the intended silencing effect. A February petition calling for Tran Thi Ngas release, signed by about 900 activists, [states](#): The arrest of Nga will not intimidate people with conscience and bravery. This will make the democratic and human rights movement stronger.

Assaults on Bloggers and Democracy Campaigners in Vietnam

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