



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### **Viet Nam: Drop trumped-up charges against human rights defenders Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh and Nguyen Van Minh**

**Paris-Geneva, August 25, 2014. *The Vietnamese Government must drop all charges against human rights defenders Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh and Nguyen Van Minh and immediately release them, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (a joint programme of FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture - OMCT) together with the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) said today.***

On August 26, 2014 at 7:30 am, Ms. **Bui Thi Minh Hang**, 50, Ms. **Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh**, 28, and Mr. **Nguyen Van Minh**, 34, will appear at the Dong Thap Provincial People's Court. They are currently detained in An Binh Commune, Cao Lanh City, Dong Thap Province. The three are charged under Article 245, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code for "causing public disorder". If convicted, they face between two and seven years in prison.

***"The harassment, arbitrary arrest, and unjust prosecution of Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh, and Nguyen Van Minh follow an all-too-familiar script that illustrates Viet Nam's failure to comply with its international human rights obligations"***, said FIDH President Karim Lahidji.

***"The international community must increase pressure on Viet Nam to obtain the release of Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh and Nguyen Van Minh as well as of the dozens of human rights defenders who remain incarcerated"***, OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock urged.

On February 11, 2014, police in Lap Vo District, Dong Thap Province, severely beat Ms. Bui Thi Minh Hang and arbitrarily detained her along with 20 other activists, including bloggers, members of the Hoa Hao Buddhist sect, and former political prisoners, as they were travelling from Ho Chi Minh City to Dong Thap Province to visit former political prisoner Nguyen Bac Truyen and his wife. Two days earlier, police had raided the couple's home and taken Truyen into custody.

Eighteen of the 21 arrested were released on February 12. However, Ms. Bui Thi Minh Hang, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh and Mr. Nguyen Van Minh remained in detention. The three are known for their peaceful human rights activities, calling in particular for religious freedom, the release of political prisoners, and for support to victims of land confiscation.

On March 10, 2014, police in Lap Vo District summoned five members of the group to try and force them to sign false statements that would corroborate the charges against Bui Thi Minh Hang. Despite the police coercion, the five refused to sign the fabricated statements.

***"The Vietnamese Government has, once again, resorted to trumped-up criminal charges to crack down on human rights defenders. For the second time in less than three years, authorities have accused Bui Thi Minh Hang of 'causing public disorder'"***, said VCHR President Vo Van Ai. ***"This shows that the Vietnamese Government has not changed its ways and Hanoi's repression of human rights defenders continues unabated - despite much rhetoric to the contrary in international fora"***, he added.

In the past, Ms. Bui Thi Minh Hang was harassed for posting information on human rights violations in Viet Nam online, staging peaceful demonstrations to protest arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, and providing support for victims of land confiscation. On November 27, 2011, police in Ho Chi Minh City arrested her on charges of "causing public disorder" for participating in a protest against the arrests of peaceful protesters in Hanoi

earlier that morning. The next day, the Hanoi People's Committee condemned her to a two-year administrative detention in the notorious Thanh Ha "rehabilitation camp" in Binh Xuyen District, Vinh Phuc Province, under Ordinance 44, which allows for detention without trial. Ms. Bui Thi Minh Hang was released in June 2012 following international pressure.

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