



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### Viet Nam: Three human rights defenders sentenced to jail

**Paris-Geneva, August 27, 2014. The arbitrary imprisonment of three human rights defenders on trumped-up charges makes a mockery of Vietnam's human rights commitments and obligations, 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.**

Today, the Dong Thap Provincial People's Court sentenced Ms. **Bui Thi Minh Hang**, 50, to three years in prison, Mr. **Nguyen Van Minh**, 34, to two years and six months, and Ms. **Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh**, 28, to two years in prison. They had been charged under Article 245, paragraph 2, of the Criminal Code for "causing public disorder". The three remain detained in An Binh Commune, Cao Lanh City, Dong Thap Province.

Police intercepted, harassed, and prevented scores of activists from attending the trial. Defence lawyers unsuccessfully requested a postponement of the proceedings after the court refused to hear testimony from 14 witnesses presented by the defence.

**"Eight months after being elected to the UN Human Rights Council, Viet Nam continues its business-as-usual repression of all voices of dissent"**, said FIDH President Karim Lahidji. **"Viet Nam's pledges to improve its legal and judicial system and to adopt policies and measures to ensure respect of human rights have not materialised. It's time for the international community to make the release of all political prisoners, including human rights defenders, a key demand in its interaction with Hanoi"**, he added.

Since January 2014, Viet Nam has detained or imprisoned at least nine bloggers and human rights defenders. Viet Nam currently holds about 200 political prisoners, the largest number in Southeast Asia.

**"Voicing your opinion, travelling to visit other prisoners or advocating for the rights of others is a right – but never a criminal offense. The ruling of today is a shameful example of a judiciary not fulfilling its tasks as protector of rights but serving as a willful instrument of power"**, noted Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General in a comment. **"We should all remember that the baseline agreement of any state pretending to undertake reforms is that those speaking out on human rights can do so in safety"**.

Police arrested Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh, and Nguyen Van Minh on February 11, 2014, in Lap Vo District, Dong Thap Province, as the three 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.

Bui Thi Minh Hang, Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh, and Nguyen Van Minh are particularly known for their peaceful campaigns for religious freedom, the release of political prisoners, and their support to victims of land confiscation.

**"The Vietnamese Government must immediately and unconditionally release the three human rights defenders and all other political prisoners"**, said VCHR President Vo Van Ai. **"The international community must demand that Hanoi match its words with actions"**, he urged.

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