

URGENT ACTION

SAFETY CONCERNS FOR VIETNAMESE ACTIVIST

There are increasing fears for the safety and security of Vietnamese Trần Minh Nhật, a former prisoner of conscience, who is facing ongoing harassment, intimidation and other human rights abuses by police in the province of Lâm Đồng in the south of Việt Nam.

On the night of 22 February, **Trần Minh Nhật** was at home when he heard loud noises outside. When Nhật and his mother went outside to see what was happening, stones were thrown at them by assailants in plain clothes who Nhật recognised as police from Lâm Hà district of Lâm Đồng province in the Central Highlands region of southern Việt Nam. One of the stones hit Nhật on the head causing him to bleed profusely. Nhật's family provided him with first aid in their home but decided he required medical attention. As they travelled to a nearby hospital, they were confronted on the road by the same group of assailants in plain clothes. Nhật and his family sought sanctuary in the nearby home of his brother. The assailants surrounded the home and threw rocks at the house then eventually dispersed. This attack prevented Nhật from travelling to the hospital but he was eventually able to return to his home that night.

The attack on Trần Minh Nhật is the latest in a series of acts of harassment, intimidation and other human rights abuses against him and his family, which have included physical attacks. This was the fifth time in February that Nhật's home was pelted with stones; on four previous occasions the perpetrators wore masks. In November 2015, Nhật was physically assaulted on two occasions by police. Two of Nhật's brothers have also faced harassment; for example, during a routine traffic stop in February, police officers threatened to beat Nhật's brother and burn down his home.

Nhật is a Redemptorist Catholic and a social rights activist. In August 2015, he was released from prison after serving a four year prison sentence for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration" under Article 79 of the Penal Code. Amnesty International designated him a prisoner of conscience.

Please write immediately in Vietnamese, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Vietnamese authorities to end the harassment, intimidation and other forms of attack against Trần Minh Nhật and his family and to take measures to ensure their safety and security;
- Urging them to carry out a prompt, thorough and transparent investigation into recent allegations of harassment, intimidation and other forms of attack against Trần Minh Nhật and his family and to bring suspected perpetrators to justice;
- Calling on them to take measures to protect all human rights defenders from acts of harassment, intimidation and other human rights violations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 APRIL 2016 TO:

Minister of Public Security

Gen Trần Đại Quang
Ministry of Public Security
44 Yet Kieu Street, Hoan Kiem district
Ha Noi, Việt Nam
Online contact:
form:http://www.mps.gov.vn/web/guest/contact_english
Salutation: Dear Minister

Chairman of the People's Committee of Lâm Đồng Province

Nguyễn Xuân Tiến
4 Tran Hung Dao Street
Da Lat City, Lâm Đồng Province
Việt Nam
Email: ubnd@lamdong.gov.vn
Salutation: Dear Chairman

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR VAN THAO NGUYEN, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 12-14 Victoria Road W8 5RD, 020 7937 1912, Fax 020 7565 3853, vanphong@vietnamembassy.org.uk, www.vietnamembassy.org.uk - Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trần Minh Nhật was part of a community of activists belonging to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in the district of Vinh, Nghệ An province. The activists were known for their advocacy on economic, social and cultural rights. Some of them, including Nhật, were bloggers and wrote articles for the Vietnam Redemptorist News, an independent news outlet reporting on social, religious and human rights issues. Nhật was among 17 of these activists who were arrested in the second half of 2011, in a crackdown by the authorities. 14 of them, including Nhật, were tried between 8 and 9 January 2013 under Article 79 of the Penal Code (see below) and sentenced to between two and a half and 13 years' imprisonment, with specified periods of house arrest upon release. Nhật was sentenced to four years' imprisonment with three years' house arrest upon release. All except three of the 14 were released at the end of their sentences, the other three are still in prison serving out their sentences.

Other acts of harassment and intimidation against Nhật and his family have taken place in 2016. In January, pesticides were sprayed on crops on land belonging to a brother of Nhật by unidentified assailants causing hundreds of pepper vines to die. In February, pesticides were sprayed on Nhật's land by unidentified assailants, causing poultry and pepper vines to die. On 10 February, a pile of dried coffee plants beside Nhật's home caught fire in the middle of the night, raising suspicions that the fire was started deliberately by unidentified assailants. It took eight people to put out the fire.

Việt Nam is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. However, these rights are severely restricted in law and practice in Việt Nam. Vaguely worded articles in the national security section of Việt Nam's 1999 Penal Code are frequently used to criminalize dissent. Those at risk include people advocating for peaceful political change, criticizing government policies, or calling for respect for human rights. Article 79 of the Penal Code (Carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration) is frequently used to detain, prosecute and imprison people for their peaceful activism, including bloggers, labour rights and land rights activists, political activists, religious followers, human rights defenders, social justice activists, and song writers.

Human rights defenders are regularly attacked in Việt Nam. Throughout 2014 and 2015, scores of activists were assaulted in the streets by police and/or men in plain clothes. They are often left bleeding and injured. Amnesty International is unaware of a single case where those suspected to be responsible have been brought to justice despite the fact that the attacks are often carried out in broad daylight, often in full view of numerous witnesses.

Name: Trần Minh Nhật

Gender m/f: m

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