

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED PASTOR ON HUNGER STRIKE SINCE 8 AUGUST

Pastor Nguyễn Công Chính is a Vietnamese prisoner of conscience serving an 11-year sentence. He has been on hunger strike since 8 August in protest at abusive treatment, denial of rights and lack of response to complaints by officials. He is in poor health.

Pastor Nguyễn Công Chính has been suffering more than three and a half years of abusive treatment and denial of his rights by prison authorities. He began a hunger strike in protest on 8 August. When his wife Trần Thị Hồng visited him on 17 August, he needed assistance to walk and looked gaunt and weak. While detained he has been subjected to verbal and physical abuse from other prisoners in collusion with - or without intervention - of prison officials; denial of medical treatment for high blood pressure and sinusitis; not allowed to buy additional food from the canteen to supplement the poor prison diet which other prisoners are free to do; and detention in solitary confinement for a prolonged period in order to prevent interaction with other prisoners. Such treatment constitutes torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as prohibited under the Convention against Torture and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules).

Letters and petitions of complaint to the courts and to the prison authorities by Pastor Nguyễn Công Chính have received no response. Additionally, letters to and from his family have not been received. He has also been denied the monthly phone call to his family, which other prisoners are allowed. He has been told that if he admits his guilt to the charges for which he was convicted then his "privileges" will be permitted.

Pastor Nguyễn Công Chính is a Mennonite pastor who was arrested in April 2011 in Pleiku, Gia Lai province in the Central Highlands. In March 2012 he was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment for "undermining the national unity policy" under Article 87 of the 1999 Penal Code. He has been detained at An Phước Prison in Phú Giáo District, Bình Dương Province in southern Viet Nam since end December 2012. The prison is 600 km from the family home and it takes 12 hours to reach.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Pastor Nguyễn Công Chính immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression, opinion and belief;
- Urging that while detained he is treated in accordance with the UN Nelson Mandela Rules for the treatment of prisoners, and that he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment including prolonged solitary confinement;
- Urging that while he is detained he is moved to a detention facility closer to his family, allowing full access to them, through visits and correspondence, and to a lawyer and medical treatment as necessary.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 OCTOBER 2016 TO:

Prime Minister

Nguyễn Xuân Phúc
Prime Minister's Office
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Online contact form:
<http://primeminister.chinhphu.vn/Utilities/Contact.aspx>

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security

To Lam
44 Yết Kiêu St. Hoàn Kiếm District
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Online contact:
http://www.mps.gov.vn/web/guest/contact_english

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister
Phạm Bình Minh
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street, Ba Dinh district
Hà Nội, Việt Nam
Fax: + 844 3823 1872
Email: Banbientap@mofa.gov.vn

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pastor Nguyor Công Chính was accused of giving interviews to foreign media and joining with other dissidents in criticizing the authorities. Prior to his arrest in April 2011, he and his family had faced constant harassment for his work with minority Christian groups in Gia Lai and Kon Tum provinces in the Central Highlands. The authorities have failed to respond to appeals by church leaders and his religious community for an end to the abuses against him and for improved treatment in prison.

Pastor Nguyor Công Chính has four young children aged between five and 13 years old. His wife Trần Thị Hồng was not allowed to visit him for 18 months after his arrest. Now she is unable to visit him once a month as permitted because of the 12 hour journey to the prison and because the family is struggling to make ends meet. She is under constant surveillance and has been arrested and beaten by the police on numerous occasions for her human rights advocacy. In April 2016 she was arrested and severely beaten in custody following her meeting two weeks earlier with a United States delegation led by Ambassador At Large on International Religious Freedom David Saperstein.

Viet 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 Viet Nam. Vaguely worded articles in the national security section of Viet Nam's 1999 Penal Code are frequently used to criminalize peaceful dissenting views or activities. Those at risk include people advocating for peaceful political change, criticizing government policies, or calling for respect for human rights. Article 87 (undermining the national unity policy) is frequently used to detain, prosecute and imprison members of minority groups for their peaceful activism. These include land rights activists, religious followers, human rights defenders and social justice activists.

Prison conditions in Viet Nam are harsh, with inadequate food and health care that falls short of the minimum requirements set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) and other international standards. Prisoners of conscience have been held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods as a punishment and have been subjected to ill-treatment, including beatings by prison guards and by other prisoners with prison guards failing to intervene. Some prisoners of conscience are frequently moved from one detention facility to another, often without their families being informed of the change in their whereabouts. Several prisoners of conscience have undertaken hunger strikes in protest at abusive treatment and poor conditions of detention. Although Viet Nam has ratified the Convention against Torture, which came into effect in February 2015, insufficient steps have been taken to bring the country into compliance with its obligations under that treaty. Amnesty International has documented torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam in a report entitled "*Prisons Within Prisons: Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam*", see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/4187/2016/en/>. Pastor Nguyor Công Chính is also included in the list of 84 prisoners of conscience in Viet Nam published in July 2016, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/4389/2016/en/>.

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