

URGENT ACTION

VIETNAMESE HUMAN RIGHTS BLOGGER ARRESTED

Human rights defender Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, known as blogger Mẹ Nấm (Mother Mushroom) was arrested on 10 October and has been charged with “conducting propaganda” against the state under Article 88 of Viet Nam’s Penal Code. She is at risk of torture and ill-treatment. It is not known where she is currently detained.

Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh was arrested at 10 am on 10 October in her home town of Nha Trang in Khánh Hòa province, South Central Coast of Vietnam. She was accompanying the mother of an activist trying to visit him in a local prison when she was arrested and driven away by security police. They took her home at around 11.30 am and conducted a search, confiscating her computer and electronic equipment and demonstration placards.

Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh has been charged with “conducting propaganda” against the state under Article 88 of Viet Nam’s Penal Code. If tried and convicted she may face imprisonment of between three and 20 years. It is not known where she is currently detained. In Viet Nam, those arrested for alleged national security offences can be held incommunicado for up to two years before being brought to trial.

State media reported that Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh is being prosecuted for using Facebook to write, post and share articles and videos critical of the ruling Communist Party of Viet Nam (CPV) and the State since 2012. The report cited a document she had shared on Facebook listing 31 people who had died after questioning in police custody as “causing detriment to national security and social safety and order.”

Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh co-founded the independent Vietnamese Bloggers Network in December 2013. She is a single mother with two children, who has faced harassment, arrest and interrogation for her peaceful activities on numerous occasions, and has been prevented from travelling overseas. She has advocated for human rights and against injustice for more than 10 years and is a popular and well-known blogger.

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

- Demanding that the authorities release Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience held solely for her peaceful activities defending and promoting human rights;
- Calling on the authorities to immediately reveal the whereabouts of Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh and ensure that she has access to a lawyer, her family and adequate medical care;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that until she is released, Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh is treated in accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners, and is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 NOVEMBER 2016 TO:

Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc

Prime Minister’s Office

Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Email:

nguoiphatngonchinhphu@chinhphu.vn

Fax: + 84 80 44940

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security Tô Lam

44 Yết Kiêu St. Hoàn Kiếm District

Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Fax: + 84 80 44130

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 Đình district

Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Fax: + 844 3823 1872

Email: ttl.mfa@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@vietnambassay.org.uk, www.vietnambassay.org.uk Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh has often taken part in events promoting human rights, and has been arbitrarily detained and beaten by security police on numerous occasions. In May 2013, activists organized peaceful outdoor picnics in Viet Nam's capital Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Nha Trang to discuss and learn about the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh attempted to go to the arranged picnic area in Nha Trang, but was prevented by security police and violence was reported against participants. In March 2014, she was among a group of bloggers who organized a Human Rights Café discussion in Ho Chi Minh City on the right to freedom of movement. Many of the bloggers, including Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, had previously been prohibited from leaving Viet Nam and/or had their passports confiscated. A third Human Rights Café discussion was to be held in Nha Trang in April 2014 on "The Convention Against Torture and the Issue of Citizens Dying at Police Stations" but had to be cancelled as Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh and two others were arrested and arbitrarily detained before it began.

The placards confiscated at her home called on the authorities to take "Formosa to court", a Taiwan company responsible for a major environmental disaster which caused the death of millions of fish in the coastal region of four provinces in April 2016; the disaster has resulted in acute hardship and loss of livelihood for thousands of people. Although Formosa eventually admitted responsibility for the disaster, thousands of people have taken part in unprecedented mass protests against the company, calling for adequate compensation to address the hardship caused.

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 99 (Conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) is frequently used to detain, prosecute and imprison dissidents for their peaceful activism, including bloggers, labour rights and land rights activists, political activists, religious followers of different churches, human rights defenders and social justice activists, and even song writers.

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 as a punishment for prolonged periods 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 the country in February 2015, insufficient steps have been taken to bring the country into compliance with its obligations under that treaty. For more information see report, *Prisons Within Prisons: Torture and Ill-treatment of Prisoners of Conscience in Viet Nam*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa41/4187/2016/en/>, published in July 2016.

Diplomatic representatives in Viet Nam, including the EU, UK and USA have issued statements condemning the arrest of Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh and calling for her immediate release.

UA: 233/16 Index: ASA 41/4979/2016 Issue Date: 13 October 2016