

23 January 2017

Vietnam – Arrest of Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai

On 21 January 2017 human rights defender Ms **Tran Thi Nga** was arrested in Ha Nam province on charges of anti-state propaganda. Two days earlier, fellow human rights defender Mr **Nguyen Van Oai** was arrested in Nghe An province on charges of ‘resisting officials on duty’ and violating his probation.

[Tran Thi Nga](#) is a member of Vietnamese Women For Human Rights, a group that includes overseas Vietnamese wishing to lend support, training, and encouragement to those who stand up to defend human rights in Vietnam. She has also assisted those whose land has been confiscated by local authorities and has demonstrated in support of democratic reform. She has been targeted a number of times because of her human rights work and in 2015 she was [beaten](#) by policemen for celebrating the release of another human rights defender from jail.

Nguyen Van Oai is a Christian activist and citizen journalist who was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment in 2013 for ‘attempting to overthrow the government’. He is a co-founder of the Association of Catholic Former Prisoners of Conscience. Following his release in 2015, he was placed on administrative probation for four years.

On 21 January Tran Thi Nga and her husband, Phan Van Phong, were arrested at their home in Phu Ly city, Ha Nam province. Tran Thi Nga was charged under Article 88 of the Vietnamese penal code for “using the internet to spread some propaganda videos and writings that are against the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” In the days prior to her arrest, Tran Thi Nga had complained of increasing intimidation and harassment against her by the police, including their surrounding of her home and physically blocking her from leaving. Police also prevented a neighbour from taking the couple’s two young sons to the city to buy them food.

At around 10pm on 19 January Nguyen Van Oai was intercepted and detained by a group of unidentified men, later identified as police officers, as he returned from a day’s fishing near Hoang Mai commune, Nghe An province. He was charged with resisting on-duty state officials after being accused of breaking the terms of his probation by leaving his locality without first informing the local authorities. It is unclear where he is currently being detained.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned at the arrests of Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai which it believes are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights in Vietnam.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai, as Front Line

Defenders believes that they are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;

2. Immediately drop all charges against Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
4. Allow Tran Thi Nga and Nguyen Van Oai immediate and unfettered access to their lawyers;
5. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Vietnam and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.