



Viet Tan (Vietnam Reform Party)

*With members inside Vietnam and around the world,
Viet Tan aims to establish democracy and reform the country through peaceful means.*

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On the trial of Cu Huy Ha Vu

Five months after arresting legal scholar Cu Huy Ha Vu for an alleged "improper relationship" with a woman, Vietnamese authorities will bring Mr. Ha Vu to trial on April 4 on the political charge of "possessing documents opposing the socialist state."

Authorities have announced that the proceedings will be open to the public, but to date have denied attendance to numerous people, including the relatives of the defendant, on the pretext of limited space in the courtroom.

Over the last several months, the regime has directed state media to spread innuendo and false accusations against Cu Huy Ha Vu while distorting his legitimate efforts to raise awareness on the dangers of bauxite mining in the Central Highlands and to propose a memorial for the soldiers who sacrificed in the defense of the Paracel and Spratly Islands. Authorities have also ignored appeals by relatives regarding Cu Huy Ha Vu's health and refused the request by attorney Nguyen Thi Duong Ha to provide legal representation for her husband.

Meanwhile, authorities have applied Article 88 of the penal code, a vague statute used to repress peaceful political voices. According to international norms as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, criticizing government policy and even suing a government leader for breaking the law are fundamental political rights. Yet the Vietnamese communist leadership is fearful of criticism and rules by law to punish dissent.

In light of the regime's persecution of peaceful political activists, Viet Tan urges all to:

1/ Pressure the Vietnamese authorities to stop abusing the criminal code, especially through applying Article 79 ("subversion") and Article 88 ("anti-state propaganda") to silence citizens who are making a contribution to the country--by speaking out on the dangers of bauxite mining or Chinese encroachment on Vietnamese sovereignty.

2/ Protest the detrimental policies of the Communist Party Politburo, in particular the kowtowing to Chinese interests by prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung.

3/ Campaign for the freedom of Cu Huy Ha Vu along with all other political prisoners. Raise your voice and encourage people to attend the trial of Cu Huy Ha Vu on April 4 in Hanoi.

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