



IPA urges Vietnam to strengthen private publishing

Geneva, 20 June 2008 - For immediate release

Following the adoption of a resolution on freedom to publish in Vietnam by its 28th Congress, the International Publishers Association (IPA) wrote to the Vietnamese Prime Minister, urging him to take concrete steps to improve the conditions of freedom to publish in Vietnam.

Meeting in Seoul, Korea, in May 2008, the 28th IPA Publishers Congress called “on Vietnam to engage and implement reforms, which will improve the freedom to publish and will allow publishers to contribute freely to the cultural, social and economic wealth of Vietnam without fear of imprisonment, persecution or harassment for themselves, and their associates. Publishers, writers, journalists, bloggers and citizens currently in prison or under house arrest for having exercised their constitutional rights to freedom of expression¹ should be freed immediately”. In Vietnam, the list of people concerned includes: Le Dinh Nhan, Le Thi Cong Nhan, Nguyen Van Dai, Nguyen van Ly, Tran Khai Than Thuy, and Tran Guoc Hien.

Bjørn Smith Simonsen, Chair of IPA’s Freedom to Publish Committee, declared: “The complex screening process that books and other written materials have to undergo prior to publication in Vietnam is of extreme concern to IPA”. He adds: “Evidence shows that this government-controlled screening mechanism aims at allowing pre- and post-publication censorship”.

As an organisation concerned with the promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of enterprise, IPA strongly condemns this screening mechanism, which is tantamount to State censorship, and therefore urged the Vietnamese government to strengthen independent publishing in Vietnam by: Abolishing the publications registration system; allowing independent publishing houses; implementing Article 5 (item 2) & repealing Article 7² of Vietnam’s Publishing Law (2004); and implementing the measures included in the specific demand adopted by the 28th IPA Publishers Congress in Seoul on 15 May 2008.

¹ The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Vietnam’s Constitution amended in 1992 (Article 69 in particular).

² “The government unanimously manages State’s publishing activities across the country. The Ministry for Culture and Communication is responsible for supporting the government in managing State’s publishing activities”

International Publishers Association

More about the situation in Vietnam:

Although Article 5 (item 2) of Vietnam's Publishing Law (2004) stipulates that "Government does not screen texts prior to publication", a complex screening mechanism involving the registration of publications with the authorities, the active role of the authorities in the editing process prior to publication, the issuance of various permits, and the provision of copies of a printed work to the authorities for verification purposes severely restrict the freedom to publish in Vietnam.

More about IPA:

IPA is the global non-governmental organization representing all aspects of book and journal publishing worldwide. Established in 1896, IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness for publishing as a force for cultural and political advancement worldwide. IPA is an industry association with a human rights mandate. IPA is an accredited non-governmental organisation enjoying observer status to United Nations organisations, including the UN Human Rights Council. IPA currently has 65 member associations in 53 countries together generating world-wide sales of USD 88 billion.

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