

May 18, 2023

Mr. Filippo Grandi
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
94 Rue de Montbrillant
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear High Commissioner for Refugees,

We are writing to express our concern about the safety and wellbeing of Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, who are at risk of abduction and refoulement by agents of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Blogger Duong Van Thai's disappearance on April 14, 2023, is the second known case in which Vietnamese agents reportedly abducted a Vietnamese refugee in Thailand and forcibly returned the individual to Vietnam to face persecution for their writings¹. As you may be aware, Duong Van Thai (who publishes under the name Thai Van Duong) fled to Thailand in 2018 and applied for refugee status, waiting to be relocated to a third country under the UN Refugee Resettlement program.

In January 2019, journalist Truong Duy Nhat was also allegedly abducted in Thailand by Vietnamese security agents while seeking asylum. The Vietnamese authorities subsequently sentenced Truong Duy Nhat to 10 years of imprisonment for "abusing his position and power while on duty".

These reported abductions, followed by arbitrary detention, are a clear violation of international refugee law and human rights law. These acts of transnational repression are also conducted as a means for repressive regimes to continue to silence and threaten the freedom of expression of dissident voices, even beyond national borders.

We urge the UNHCR to pay closer attention to these cases and take all necessary measures to protect Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand from abduction and refoulement. This includes:

- Carrying out risk assessments of Vietnamese asylum seekers and individuals granted refugee status in order to determine the risk of physical attacks, including abductions and illegal transfer to Vietnam that they face, and implement effective protection measures
- Speeding up the resettlement procedure in a third country for refugees in order to provide a safe and secure alternative to remaining in Thailand or being forcibly returned to Vietnam.

The UNHCR has a vital role to play in protecting the rights and safety of refugees and asylum seekers. We urge you to call on the Vietnamese government to immediately release

¹ <https://rsf.org/en/vietnam-fails-reveal-fate-blogger-abducted-thailand>

Duong Van Thai, Truong Duy Nhat, and any other Vietnamese asylum seeker and/or human rights defender who was previously abducted on foreign soil.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Signatures

Ms Nathalie Seff, Executive Director, ACAT France

Mr. Christoph Schürhaus, ACAT Germany

ACAT Belgium

ACAT Burundi

ACAT Canada

ACAT Ghana

ACAT Liberia

ACAT Spain / Catalonia

ACAT United Kingdom

Dr. Pavin Chachavalpongpun, Founder, 112WATCH

Mr. Sébastien Desfayes, Chairman, Cosunam

Ms Doreen Chen, Executive Director, Destination Justice

Ms Claire Doran, member of the International Board of FIACAT

Mr. Jean-Daniel Vigny, member of the International Board of FIACAT

Justice Transitional Working Group

Ms Talita Pessoa, PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Center Program Director, PEN America

Mr. Peter Dahlin, Director, Safeguard Defenders

Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai, Chairman, The Brotherhood for Democracy

Mr. Duy Hoang, Executive Director, Viet Tan

Mr. Daniel Bastard, Asia-Pacific Director, Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)