



TRANSITIONAL  
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WORKING GROUP



## Open Letter Calling for Sanctions Against General To Lam for Gross Human Rights Violations in Vietnam

23 September 2024

To:

- **Joe Biden, President of the United States of America**
- **Justin Trudeau, Prime minister of Canada**
- **Keir Stamer, Prime minister of the United Kingdom**
- **Anthony Albanese, Prime minister of Australia**
- **Jonas Gahr Støre, Prime minister of Norway**
- **Charles Michel, President of the European Council**

We, the undersigned international human rights organizations, urgently call on your government to investigate and sanction **General To Lam**, the current President of Vietnam and general secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party. As Minister of Public Security from 2016 to May 2024, General To Lam was the chief architect of a widespread campaign of repression and violence.

General To Lam is directly responsible for the following gross human rights abuses:

### 1. International Abductions

As Minister of Public Security, General To Lam orchestrated the unlawful abduction of Vietnamese dissidents abroad. This includes the well-documented case of Trinh Xuan Thanh, kidnapped in Berlin in 2017 and smuggled through Slovakia, where To Lam was on the plane to take Trinh Xuan Thanh to Moscow and then to Vietnam. To Lam was also in charge when Vietnamese security agents abducted bloggers Truong Duy Nhat in 2019 and Duong Van Thai in 2023 from Bangkok. These actions constitute blatant violations of international law — infringing on the sovereignty of other nations and disregarding fundamental human rights.

### 2. Violence Against Communities

One of the most egregious acts under General To Lam's tenure was the violent police raid on Dong Tam village in January 2020, resulting in the death of respected community leader Le Dinh Kinh. This assault on a peaceful rural community by To Lam's security apparatus, highlights the targeting of civilians who stand in opposition to state-sanctioned land grabs and other abuses of power. The Ministry of Public Security under To Lam also heavily persecuted ethnic minorities living in Vietnam's northwest and Central Highlands, often forcing these communities to renounce their Christian faith.

### **3. Crackdown on Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Activists**

Under General To Lam's leadership, hundreds of human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, bloggers, and environmental advocates have been arbitrarily arrested, detained, and imprisoned. Since 2016, Vietnamese activists have faced lengthy prison sentences simply for exercising their rights to free speech and peaceful assembly as documented by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

### **4. Forcing Activists into Exile**

General To Lam has also been responsible for forcing dozens of activists into exile. Fearing arrest, torture, and persecution, numerous human rights advocates have fled Vietnam, leaving behind their homes and families to seek refuge in foreign countries. This calculated repression is designed to silence voices critical of the Hanoi government's human rights record and to stifle democratic discourse within Vietnam.

### **5. Enemy of the Internet**

In Vietnam, authorities have deployed a judicial administrative and technological "strike force" to control online information. To Lam's security apparatus has pressured foreign internet companies to censor social media content and targeted online dissidents with in-person monitoring, to the point where being followed in the street and other forms of surveillance "have become a part of daily life" for Vietnamese bloggers.

#### **Call to Action:**

We urge you to take decisive action against General To Lam for his crimes — including but not limited to violations of international human rights law, political repression, and acts of extraterritorial abductions. We respectfully ask you to consider the following measures:

- Targeted sanctions under the Magnitsky law and equivalent human rights legislation, freezing General To Lam's assets and barring his entry into your respective country.
- Public condemnation of General To Lam's actions and vocal support for the Vietnamese people who continue to suffer under his repressive policies.

Vietnamese nationals who exercise their human rights and advocate for democracy are counting on the international community to stand with them. It is crucial that General To Lam, as a key figure in perpetuating these abuses, is held accountable.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

**ACAT Belgium Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture)**

**ACAT-France (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture- France)**

**ACAT Germany (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture)**

**Brotherhood for Democracy**

**Transitional Justice Working Group**

**Viet Tan**