

Human Rights and Digital Security Groups Call for Release of Video Journalist Nguyen Van Hoa



May 3, 2017

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, Vietnamese authorities must immediately release Nguyen Van Hoa, a video journalist who has been detained since January.

Mr. Hoa is a digital security trainer, citizen journalist, and contributor to Radio Free Asia. He covered stories about the Formosa environmental disaster which led to mass fish deaths off Vietnam's coast. Mr. Hoa, 22, was the first person to use a flycam drone to broadcast live footage of protests outside the Formosa Ha Tinh steel plant. Last October, his aerial photos and video of more than 10,000 people peacefully protesting were picked up by many media outlets and went viral. Before his arrest, Mr. Hoa had opened classes to teach computer security literacy in rural regions of Vietnam.

Nguyen Van Hoa was arrested on January 11, 2017 and charged with "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state" under Article 258 of the Vietnamese Penal Code. He was initially held incommunicado for weeks before his family received notice of his arrest. According to family sources, authorities have changed the charges against him to "anti-state propaganda" under Article 88.

Vietnamese authorities recently released a video of Hoa "apologizing" for his reporting of the protests in an apparent attempt to dissuade the public from participating in peaceful civic action and citizen journalism.

Nguyen Van Hoa's detention comes as the Vietnamese government launches a crackdown against citizen journalists, online activists and human rights defenders. Two bloggers, Nguyen Van Oai and Tran Thi Nga, were detained within days of Hoa's arrest.

With mounting social and environmental challenges, the government of Vietnam should welcome transparency and peaceful dialogue. Repressing citizen journalists is not only a violation of human rights but also a major impediment to Vietnam's aspirations to become a tech and innovation hub.

Signatories

Access Now

ASL19

Aspiration

Brave New Software

China Digital Times Inc.

Digital Rights Foundation

Electronic Frontier Foundation

eQualit.ie

Freya Labs

Front Line Defenders

Give 'N Get Nigeria

GreatFire.org

Guardian Project

Human Rights in China

Internet Without Borders

Netblocks

Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI)

Reporters Sans Frontieres

Security First

Sinar Project

Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)

Taiwan Association for Human Rights

Thai Netizen Network

The 88 Project

The Serval Project

Tibet Action Institute

Usuarios Digitales

Viet Tan