

**Open Letter to Vietnam's Leaders to Oppose the Imprisonment of
Truong Huy San (also known as Huy Đức)**

20 September 2024

General Secretary and President Tô Lâm
Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính
National Assembly Chairman Trần Thanh Mẫn

Cc:

Ms. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders
Ms. Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion
Dr. Matthew Gillett, Chair-Rapporteur, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
Foreign Embassies in Hanoi

Dear Honorable Sirs and Madams:

We write as academics, journalists, diplomats, and researchers with an enduring interest in Vietnam to express our serious concern about the detention of Truong Huy San also known as Huy Đức, a prominent writer, historian, and investigative reporter. In addition to his scholarship and journalism, Huy Đức is widely admired for his environmental activism, and his efforts to promote post-Vietnam War reconciliation.

According to reports in state media, the police arrested Huy Đức on June 1, 2024 under Article 331 of the Vietnamese penal code for “abusing rights of freedom and democracy to infringe upon the interests of the state.” He was not permitted contact with lawyers or family members during the three months following his arrest. Public concern about his condition is intense.

In the absence of an official explanation for why precisely Huy Đức has been detained, many people have speculated that his arrest was triggered by comments he posted on social media about the political direction of the country. But Vietnam's Constitution explicitly protects citizens' rights to lodge complaints against state agencies and individual authorities (Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam [revised 2013], Article 30). The Constitution also guarantees citizens' rights to freedom of speech and the press (Article 25).

Since these are the very rights that Huy Đức is exercising, he should not have been arrested or detained.

It is also wrong that Huy Đức is still in jail. After more than three months of imprisonment, he has neither been prosecuted nor convicted of any crime. Vietnam's Constitution stipulates that someone who may have committed a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law (Article 31).

These rights are also stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's government has formally endorsed. Indeed, Vietnam is now a

member of the United Nations Human Rights Council that supports and administers that Declaration.

We call on the Vietnamese government to abide by the provisions of its constitution and the international treaties that it has signed and release Huy Đức immediately.

We also strongly urge the government to stop harassing, intimidating, or otherwise persecuting persons who peacefully express their views or opinions.

Signed:

No.	Name	Affiliation	Country of Residence
1	David Abel	<i>Boston Globe</i>	USA
2	Brett Anderson	<i>New York Times</i>	USA
3	Chris Arnold	<i>National Public Radio</i>	USA
4	Michitake Aso	University at Albany-SUNY	USA
5	Jen Balderama	<i>The Atlantic</i>	USA
6	Thomas A. Bass	University at Albany-SUNY	USA
7	Katrin Bennhold	<i>New York Times</i>	Germany
8	David Biggs	University of California, Riverside	USA
9	David Brown	Independent journalist, retired diplomat	USA
10	Bùi Văn Phú	Teacher, journalist	USA
11	Cari Coe	Montana State University	USA
12	Michael Robert Dedrick	Veterans for Peace USA Daniel Ellsberg Chapter 92	USA
13	Đỗ Thị Thanh Thủy	Simon Fraser University	Canada
14	Đỗ Tuyết Khanh	World Trade Organization	Switzerland
15	Olga Dror	Texas A&M University	USA
16	Thai Duong	Unaffiliated	USA
17	George Dutton	University of California, Los Angeles	USA
18	Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox	Western Connecticut State University	USA
19	Christoph Giebel	University of Washington, Seattle	USA
20	Christopher Goscha	Université du Québec à Montréal	Canada
21	François Guillemot	Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Lyon	France
22	Hà Dương Tường	Université de Technologie de Compiègne	France
23	Eva Hansson	Stockholm University	Sweden
24	Bill Hayton	Independent researcher	UK
25	Judith Henchy	University of Washington	USA
26	Eric Henry	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	USA
27	Tuan Hoang	Pepperdine University	USA
28	Alec Holcombe	Ohio University, Athens	USA

29	R. Kyle Hörst	Unaffiliated	USA
30	Janet Alison Hoskins	University of Southern California	USA
31	Hue-Tam Ho Tai	Harvard University	USA
32	Rob Hurlle	Australian National University	Australia
33	Michele Janette	Kansas State University	USA
34	Charles Keith	Michigan State University	USA
35	Kristy Kelly	Drexel University	USA
36	Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet	Australian National University	USA
37	John Kleinen	Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research	Netherlands
38	Gary Kulik	Independent scholar	USA
39	Scott Laderman	University of Minnesota, Duluth	USA
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43	Martha Lincoln	San Francisco State University	USA
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45	Borje Ljunggren	Swedish Institute of International Affairs	Sweden
46	David G. Marr	Australian National University	Australia
47	Shawn McHale	George Washington University	USA
48	Andre Menras	Author, movie maker	France
49	Edward Miller	Dartmouth College	USA
50	Anthony Morreale	University of California, Berkeley	USA
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53	Hiep Nguyen	Dept. of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water, NSW	Australia
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64	Phạm Thị Hoài	Independent writer, journalist	Germany
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66	Sophie Quinn-Judge	Temple University	USA
67	Seb Rumsby	University of Birmingham	UK
68	Mark Sidel	University of Wisconsin-Madison	USA
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