

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/blogger-gets-30-months-in-prison-02-10-2013,45273.html>

Asia - Vietnam

Sham trial

Blogger gets 30-months in prison on trumped-up tax evasion charge

2 October 2013

Reporters Without Borders condemns the 30-month prison sentence and fine of 59,000 dollars that a Hanoi court passed today on dissident lawyer and blogger **Le Quoc Quan** on a trumped-up charge of tax evasion. The court also ordered the seizure of Quan's assets, worth 27,000 dollars.

"This clearly politically-motivated sentence is designed to gag and punish a dissident and is part of a strategy orchestrated by the Communist Party to persecute all independent news and information providers in Vietnam," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We deplore the way this trial was conducted, including the fact that the defendant's relatives were not allowed into the courtroom and the way the authorities again manipulated the media. Quan is the victim of a judicial system that takes its orders from authoritarian party officials. He must be released."

Insisting on his innocence, Quan said he was the victim of political decisions. "I will continue my fight against corruption, attacking bureaucracy and stagnancy that are undermining our country," he told an Agence France-Presse reporter who was allowed to follow the trial from a room adjoining the courtroom.

Neither his brother, **Le Quoc Quyet**, nor his sister was allowed into the courtroom, while foreign news agency reporters were ordered not to bring any recording equipment into the courthouse.

The trial prompted unprecedented demonstrations. Many activists and ordinary citizens gathered in Hanoi to show their support for Quan and protest against the persecution of bloggers, with demonstrators managing to block traffic on one of the capital's main arteries.

Large numbers of police were deployed to prevent protesters from getting to the courthouse. A bus taking members of Quan's family to Hanoi was intercepted by police, who searched their bags and then sent them home. In Hanoi, the authorities prevented two bloggers, **Phuong Bich** and **Nguyen Huu Vinh**, and the dissident **Pham Hong Son** from leaving their homes.

Quan, 41, was arrested in December 2012, one day after posting an article criticizing article 4 of the constitution, which assigns the Communist Party a leading role in managing the country's affairs.

Although charged with tax evasion, it was clear that the real reason for his arrest was his blogging and his calls for political pluralism, religious freedom and civil rights. His trial was originally scheduled to take place on 9 July, but was postponed at the last minute.

Similar tax evasion charges were brought in 2008 against **Nguyen Van Hai**, a dissident who blogged under the pseudonym of **Dieu Cay**. He was given an initial sentence of 30 months in prison but, before he was due to be released, he was given an additional 12-year jail sentence on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

Vietnam is ranked 172nd out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#) and figures in the 2013 "[Enemies of the Internet](#)" special report on surveillance.

During a visit to Paris last week, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung [refused](#) to meet with Reporters Without Borders, which wanted to hand him a petition for the release of 35 Vietnamese bloggers that has been signed by 25,000 people.

Support independent news providers in Vietnam by signing the petition [here](#).

Read the latest report on Vietnam entitled "Programmed death of freedom of information" [here](#).

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 28.3 kb)
-