



For immediate release – 17 June 2009

PRESS RELEASE

**Vietnam: Release Leading Human Rights Lawyer Le Cong Dinh
Immediately and Unconditionally**

Leading Vietnamese human rights lawyer Le Cong Dinh was detained by police on 13 June 2009 and has been held since then on charges of breaching Article 88 of the Penal Code of Vietnam for “distributing propaganda against Vietnam”. If convicted, Dinh faces up to twenty years in prison. ARTICLE 19 and Index on Censorship call on the Vietnamese authorities to free Dinh immediately and unconditionally, and to repeal Article 88 in full.

Dinh is a respected Vietnamese lawyer and human rights defender who has, in the past, defended Vietnamese pro-democracy activists, bloggers and labour rights activists. He has also been an outspoken proponent of political pluralism and other causes which the Vietnamese government disapproves of.

Article 88 of the Penal Code makes it an offence, among other things, to defame the Vietnamese administration, to spread fabricated news to foment confusion among the people, and to circulate documents against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. All of these offences fail to meet the standards set out in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Vietnam acceded to in September 1982, thereby undertaking to respect its provisions. In particular, none of these offences can be justified as necessary to protect national security or public order. Indeed, criticism of the authorities is central to democracy.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Toby Mendel, Senior Legal Counsel: ARTICLE 19 at a19law@hfx.eastlink.ca or +1 902 431 3688; or Jo Glanville, Editor: Index on Censorship at jo@indexoncensorship.org or +44 (0) 20 7324 2531.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.
- Index on Censorship has been working to protect and promote freedom of expression since 1972 through its award-winning magazine, website and international projects. www.indexoncensorship.org.