



Nguyen Van Dai

Country : Vietnam

Nguyen Van Dai (David) is a Christian lawyer in the communist country of Vietnam. An elder in his local Christian Missionary Alliance church, he has been described by some of his Advocates International colleagues as a brave, gracious and tactful advocate for human rights, religious freedom and democracy – three things he believes in passionately, both as a Christian and as a lawyer.

On March 6 2007, police searched Dai's house and his office before arresting and then charging him with violating Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code which deals with 'conducting propaganda activities to harm the security of the state'. The arrest order provides for Dai to be temporarily incarcerated for four months pending investigation. In fact he risks a much longer detention and the four month period may be extended four times for national security offenders. Conviction of this charge carries a jail term of three to twelve years, with a twenty year sentence for particularly serious crimes. Article 88 is one of the vaguely-defined catch-all national security offences in Vietnam's criminal code which has incurred widespread international criticism.

Thirty seven year old Dai has defended imprisoned cyber-dissidents and regularly posted pro-democracy essays on-line. His arrest marks the first time in the sixteen year history of Advocates International that a lawyer within its global network has been jailed. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) Religious Liberties Commission said in a statement that Dai was being persecuted for his work as an advocate for religious liberty. As a lawyer who is representing the persecuted church and advocating for religious liberty he has considerable evidence that Vietnam is not living up to its International agreements to improve

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EMAIL ALERT
for prayer & action
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religious liberty in the country. Dai is convinced that he has not stepped outside the boundaries of the law, however he is acutely aware that the struggle for religious freedom and democracy in Vietnam is far from over and will still encounter many difficulties. It has been confirmed that Dai has begun a hunger strike.

Vu Minh Khanh, his wife, recounted how uniformed and plain clothes police had started following the couple at 8am on the morning of the sixth. At around 11am another group of 5-6 police forced her husband into a car before taking him to their home and officially placing him under arrest.

PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ Pray for Dai, that the joy of the Lord would be his strength
- ▶ Pray that Vietnamese believers will remain faithful and continue to stand strong in their faith
- ▶ Pray for his wife Vu Minh Khanh
- ▶ Pray for Dai's release

'But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him'
Acts 12:5

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THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Hebrews 13:3 'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering'

TAKE ACTION!

Please write a polite letter requesting that Nguyen Van Dai is released

Please do not mention Release International

Please write to

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Hanoi
Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Fax: + 844 823 1872
c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs
E-mail: banbientap@mofa.gov.vn

A sample letter is given below

[Date]

Dear Prime Minister,

I would like to congratulate the People's Republic of Vietnam for hosting the APEC Pacific-rim summit and for recent membership of the World Trade Organisation. There is now an excellent opportunity for the Government of Vietnam to demonstrate its commitment to international standards on human rights.

In highlighting the importance of human rights protections as part of Vietnam's membership in the international community, in particular the rights to freedom of expression, I am writing to express my concern at the arrest and detention of the Christian lawyer and human rights defender Nguyen Van Dai on March 6th 2007. Nguyen Van Dai has been charged with breaching Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code.

His continued detention violates Vietnam's obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Your government has said many times that Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of expression. Arresting and imprisoning people like Nguyen Van Dai, an accomplished advocate and ambassador for recent progress in Vietnam specifically in the area of human rights, directly contradicts this and only damages Vietnam's standing in the eyes of the international community.

I would also like to urge the Government of Vietnam to repeal or amend the 1999 Criminal Code as a matter of urgency to bring it into line with Vietnam's international human rights obligations. In so doing, to ensure that ambiguous provisions relating to national security are clearly defined or removed, so they cannot be applied in an arbitrary manner to stifle legitimate dissent, debate, opposition, and freedom of expression.

I ask you to uphold the rights of all Vietnamese citizens to freedom of expression and to release Nguyen Van Dai immediately. At the same time I urge your government to adopt all legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure the rights and freedoms for the defence of human rights as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights defenders (1998).

Yours sincerely,