

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

May 6, 2025

Dear Secretary Rubio,

As [Vietnam Human Rights Day](#) approaches, we, the undersigned organizations and advocates for free expression, press freedom, and human rights, urge you to call, in direct conversations with Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and Public Security Minister Luong Tam Quang, for the following: the immediate release of [Pham Doan Trang](#), [Le Huu Minh Tuan](#), [Pham Chi Dung](#), [Nguyen Tuong Thuy](#), [Nguyen Vu Binh](#), and other Vietnamese journalists and [writers](#) unjustly imprisoned for their courageous reporting; the end of harassment and threats towards journalists and writers; and the repeal legislation that violates free press and expression.

Vietnam continues to crack down on free expression and is a leading jailer of journalists and writers in the world. Journalists and writers have been targeted under vague and overly broad provisions of [Vietnam's Penal Code](#), such as Articles 117 and 331, which [criminalize free expression](#) and dissent. Additionally, the Vietnamese government utilizes its Cybersecurity Law, Decree 53, and Decree 147 to suppress free expression, monitor online activity, and target dissent by mandating data localization and data handovers. Vietnam [remains](#) one of the most repressive countries for free expression and press freedom, and ranks 173rd out of 180 in the [2025 Reporters without Borders \(RSF\)'s World Press Freedom Index](#) and is among the world's leading jailers of journalists and writers, according to data from [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ), [RSF](#), and [PEN America](#).

The Vietnamese government not only imprisons and threatens writers but also suppresses everyday free expression by [monopolizing traditional media](#) like radio, television, and newspapers. While the internet and platforms like [Facebook](#) and YouTube offer spaces for dissent, they are [increasingly subjected](#) to government censorship, leaving no space for free expression and stifling public debate. This environment creates a chilling effect where individuals self-censor out of fear of retaliation, further undermining the ability to openly critique or challenge the Vietnamese government.

Imprisonment of Journalists and Writers

Journalists and writers in their efforts to expose corruption, document human rights violations, and advocate for the release of their fellow writers, journalists, and activists have endured [lengthy sentences](#), [poor prison conditions](#), and severe restrictions on their fundamental rights.

Pham Doan Trang, the winner of RSF's 2019 [Press Freedom Prize](#), the U.S. Secretary of State's 2022 [International Women of Courage Award](#), CPJ's 2022 [International Press Freedom Award](#), and PEN America's 2024 [PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award](#), was sentenced in 2021 to nine years in prison. Le Huu Minh Tuan, who began serving an 11-year sentence in 2020, has suffered from deteriorating health in prison and has been [denied adequate medical assistance](#) by the Vietnamese government despite repeated pleas from his family. Five Vietnamese U.S. Agency for Global Media-funded network journalists and contributors are currently imprisoned. They include prominent [Radio Free Asia](#) (RFA) and [Voice of America](#) (VOA) journalists [Nguyen Tuong Thuy](#) (RFA), [Nguyen Vu Binh](#) (RFA), and [Pham Chi Dung](#) (VOA), who have been wrongfully jailed and handed disproportionately long prison sentences for exercising their rights of free expression.

Harassment and Threats to Journalists and Writers

[Nguyen Van Hoa](#), a contracted videographer with RFA, was sentenced to seven years in prison in November 2017 for his environmental reporting, which the Vietnamese government claimed was “anti-state propaganda.” During his imprisonment, he was [assaulted](#) multiple times. Following his [release](#) in January 2024 after completing his sentence, he remains under house arrest and faces ongoing risks of further prosecution.

Online commentator [Dang Thi Hue](#), along with her friends and family, has faced ongoing harassment by the Vietnamese government. In May 2024, she was abducted by six individuals, one in a police uniform, and detained for over 24 hours. During the interrogation, she was pressured to stop supporting prisoners of conscience and posting critical content on Facebook. After the interrogation, she was forced into hiding for her safety.

We ask the U.S. State Department to:

1. Facilitate humanitarian visas and financial assistance for Vietnamese journalists, writers, and dissidents facing persecution, including those impacted by the defunding of USAGM, such as RFA and VOA journalists.
2. Allocate funding and resources to independent media outlets and organizations promoting free expression and press freedom in Vietnam.
3. In discussion with the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Public Security call on them to:
 - a. Immediately and unconditionally release all imprisoned writers, journalists, and dissidents including Pham Doan Trang, Le Huu Minh Tuan, Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, and Nguyen Vu Binh.
 - b. Request access for prison visits, independent medical check-ups, fair legal representation, and legal due process in accordance with international human

rights standards for all jailed journalists, writers, and dissidents to ensure their well-being.

- c. End the harassment and threats against journalists, writers, and dissidents as well as their friends and family members for their free expression.
- d. End the use of repressive legal provisions including Article 117 & 331 of the Vietnamese Penal Code, Cybersecurity Law, and corresponding decrees to silence free expression and independent journalism.

As a longstanding advocate for global human rights, your voice can amplify the plight of these brave journalists and writers and reinforce the U.S. leadership in defending free expression and human dignity worldwide.

Signed By:

PEN America

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Legal Initiatives for Vietnam

PEN International

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Vietnamese Advocates for Change

Vietnamese Abroad PEN Centre