

### **Adopting Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience**

For more information, contact: [bpsos@bpsos.org](mailto:bpsos@bpsos.org)

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Under the Defending Freedom Project, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and US Commission for International Religious Freedom jointly recruit members of the House of Representatives to adopt prisoners of conscience worldwide. Since July 2013, BPSOS has participated in this project by encouraging adoption of Vietnamese prisoners of conscience in the priority list below.

**Tran Vu Anh Binh (m)** is a songwriter and musician. He co-founded the Patriotic Youth to promote public consciousness on social justice and civic engagement. The Patriotic Youth comprises of college students, young artists, young professionals, and musicians. Members create blogs and websites to advocate for the respect of human rights, freedom, free elections, and Vietnam's territorial integrity. Binh wrote many songs along those themes and posted them on YouTube. In 2011 the authorities arrested him and a fellow songwriter, Vo Minh Tri, for such YouTube postings. He was sentenced to six years in prison and two years of house arrest on charges of conducting anti-state propaganda.

**Bui Van Trung (m)** is a Hoa Hao Buddhist lay leader. In 2006 he built a lecture hall in the yard of his house in An Phu District, An Giang Province, to allow fellow Hoa Hao Buddhist adherents to congregate, study the Church's teachings, pray, and engage in celebrations and other religious rituals. The government ordered Mr. Trung to close the lecture hall, and harassed participants of activities held at the lecture hall. In July 2012 the police arrested Mr Trung's son without a warrant. In September he was tried and sentenced to two years and six months in prison for 'opposing the state'. On 30 October 2012 Mr.r Trung himself was arrested. In January 2013 he was sentenced to four years in prison on charges of 'opposing officials performing their duty'. He is in ill health in prison. On February 11, 2014, Mr Trung's son-in-law Nguyen Van Minh was arrested and held incommunicado at An Binh Detention Center, Cao Lanh, Dong Thap Province. Minh was attacked and arrested on his way to visit Hoa Hao Buddhist co-religionists who had been brutally assaulted by the local police.

**Nguyen Huu Vinh (m)** is best known as blogger Anhbasam (Talking Nonsense). His blog was among the most popular in Vietnam. On May 5, 2014 he was arrested together with his staff member Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy, on charges of "abusing democratic freedoms" for operating a website that provides links to social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural issues in Vietnam. The two were held for almost two years without trial. On March 23, 2016 he was sentenced to five years in prison and Ms. Minh Thuy to three years. Observers, including a German member of Parliament, were denied access to the trial.

**Nguyen Dinh Ngoc (m)** is a well-known blogger under pen name Nguyen Ngoc Gia. A former staff member at Ho Chi Minh City Television, he wrote about social and political issues relating to democracy and human rights for the Vietnamese page of Radio Free Asia, and on independent websites including Dan Luan, Dan Lam Bao, and Dan Chim Viet. He has also expressed support for bloggers and activists imprisoned for exercising their basic rights. Charged with "conducting propaganda against the state," on March 30, 2016 he was sentenced to four years imprisonment followed by three years of administrative detention.

**Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai (m)** is one of the best known human rights lawyers in Vietnam. On December 16, 2015 he was arrested together with a fellow human rights advocate, Le Thu Ha, on charges of “conducting propaganda against the state.” In 2006, Dai founded the Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam. In early 2007, he was arrested on charges of “propaganda against the state” and sentenced to five years of imprisonment to be followed by four years of house arrest. With his sentence later reduced by one year, he was released from prison in March 2011. Soon afterwards Dai established the Brotherhood for Democracy, which attracted many young activists, including Le Thu Ha. Nine months after the completion of his house detention, Dai was arrested along with Ha. The two continue to be held incommunicado.

**Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh (m) (Adopted by Congressman Alan Lowenthal (D-CA))** is a Lutheran pastor who was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2012 for "undermining national unity" by maintaining ties with dissident groups and distributing material deemed to have “slandered” government authorities. Before his arrest, Pastor Chinh did missionary work in service of Montagnard communities in the Central Highlands, and spoke out against government’s mistreatment against Montagnard Christians.

**Doan Huy Chuong (m) and Nguyen Doan Quoc Hung (m) (Adopted by Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD))** are labor activists who were charged with disrupting national security and sentenced to between seven and nine years in prison for organizing workers at a Vietnamese shoe factory in 2010. Government authorities arrested Doan and Nguyen in early 2010 shortly after they had helped organize workers at the My Phong shoe factory in Vietnam, where they distributed a leaflet outlining the striking workers’ demands. Authorities held the three organizers for eight months before charging them with threatening national security. On October 28, 2010, 10 days after their indictment, the People’s Court of Tra Vinh convicted them and sentenced Doan to seven years in prison and Nguyen to nine years in prison. In detention, they have been subjected to serious mistreatment, including solitary confinement, repeated beatings and torture. As a result, Doan has lost the use of one hand. Despite continued poor health—including rashes and liver problems—they are forced to endure hard labor.

**Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (m) (Adopted by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA))** is a Vietnamese blogger, entrepreneur and businessman, who was arrested in May 2009, and is currently serving a 16 year prison sentence. He was initially charged with theft of a telecommunications device, but the authorities were unable to find any evidence for this, and later charged Tran with “promoting anti-Socialist, anti-government propaganda” and undertaking “activities aimed at subverting the people’s government”. He was jailed, along with three other democracy activists, after a trial lasting just one day; his sentence is the longest ever handed down to a dissident in Vietnam. Tran is the founder and CEO of One-Connection Internet, an Internet service provider, and the author of several dissident blogs and articles on Vietnam’s economy.

**Bui Thi Minh Hang (f) (Adopted by Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA))** is a prominent activist who played a leading role in the protests against Chinese territorial claims on the Spratly and Paracel islands in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City between June and August 2011. On November 27, 2011, police arrested Bui Thi Minh Hang allegedly “causing public disorder” because of her silent protest against the arrests of other peaceful protesters. The next day the police ordered her detained without trial and sent her to Thanh Ha Re-education Center in Vinh Phuc Province for 24 months of administrative detention. Due to domestic and international outcry, the authorities released Bui Thi Minh Hang in April 2012. After her release, she immediately resumed her human rights campaigning. On February 11, 2014, police arrested Bui Thi Minh Hang, along with Nguyen Van Minh and Nguyen Thi Thuy Quynh, as the three were travelling from Ho Chi Minh City to Dong Thap Province to visit former prisoner of conscience Nguyen Bac Truyen and his wife, on charges of “causing public disorder”. On August 26, 2014, the Dong Thap Provincial People’s Court sentenced Bui Thi Minh Hang to 3 years in prison.