

*Nguyễn Hoàng Quốc Hùng – a labor union activist  
Sentenced to 9 years of prison for defending the rights of workers*



Mr. Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung is an advocate for the rights of workers and a member of Bloc 8406. He is also a member of the “Committee to Protect Vietnamese workers,” which is based in Warsaw, Poland. He was joined in this cause by Mr. Doan Huy Chuong and Ms. Do Thi Minh Hanh. In February of 2010, they organized a strike that involved around 10,000 workers of My Phong Shoe Factory in Tra Vinh Province. The strikers demanded improved working conditions and welfare. Hung, Chuong and Hanh were arrested. On October 27, 2010, Tra Vinh’s People’s Court sentenced Hung to 9 years of prison while Hanh and Chuong each received 7 years. Family members and legal counsels were denied attendance at the trial. Hung is currently detained in Xuyen Moc, Ba Ria–Vung Tau Province.

Born in 1981 in Tien Giang, Hung graduated from Ho Chi Minh University as a computer engineer. He was a staunch supporter of the “Dân Oan”, a movement that rallies exploited workers and farmers with expropriated farmlands. He, Chuong and Hanh shared their knowledge of the Labor Code with the workers to help them understand their rights, and how to fight for it in case the employers did not meet their demands. The trio showed them how to stand for their dignity and require respect from employers.

Hung received many warnings from the police for “colluding with a number of opposition groups and extremist petitioners, and disturbing public order”. On July 28, 2009 Hung was arrested and held in a police station located in Phu Nhuan county. Upon his arrival there, Hung was savagely beaten. As a result, he received multiple wounds and his nose was broken. In the early hours of Feb 24, 2010, he was arrested while commuting in the area of Dong Nai province. At the police station he was beaten and tortured without mercy. Hung publicly denounced the local government for using torture during interrogation to pressure him to confess to crimes he did not commit.

In a letter addressed to governments and human rights organizations dated October 26, 2010, his family asked for intervention in his favor as he had been held in prison without trial for 8 months. During his detention, he was subjected to solitary confinement, treated as a criminal and forced to admit fabricated charges. He was restricted in receiving family visits and supplies.

On October 26, 2010, the Tra Vinh People's Court tried Hung without the presence of a defense attorney or family members. The prosecution and the judge accused him of "leading and masterminding" the labor organizing group because he is the oldest among the three. He was sentenced to 9 years of prison; his two fellow labor organizers, Do Thi Minh Hanh and Doan Huy Chuong, received 7 years each. The day after, it was reported on the website of Tra Vinh police that "Hung and his comrades disseminated leaflets inciting the workers to protest and strike at the shoe factory My Phong, in the province of Tra Vinh". These leaflets demanded the right of workers to form their own labor union and elect their union leaders, decent salaries, medical coverage, and reinstatement of dismissed workers because they were on strike. The government accused the organized strikes as an "act towards disrupting public security and creating social unrest in order to undermine the government of the People", according to article 89 of the Penal Code.

On March 16, /2011, Phil Robertson, deputy-director of Human Rights Watch, section Asia, said that "All that [Nguyen] Hoang Quoc Hung, Do Thi Minh Hanh and Doan Huy Chuong did is to assert the rights of the Vietnamese workers which are: right to organize, assemble and strike peacefully to demand salary increase and improve working conditions. The condemnation and sentencing of the three activists by the government is inhuman. The way the Vietnamese government and its institutions treat the workers is in stark violation of worker's rights, namely the rights to found, organize and manage the union themselves. As a fallout, Vietnamese laborers are poorer and poorer. There is no justification for imposing such harsh sentencing on those three grassroots union activists and they should be set free immediately".

Two days later, the People's Appeals Court upheld Hung's 9-years sentence. Again, his family members were allowed to attend.

On March 1, 2013, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that the Vietnamese government had arbitrarily detained, and called for his unconditional release.



Please support Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung, a prisoner of conscience and a brave fighter for Human Rights and Justice for the Vietnamese workers, by disseminating this document to human rights organizations and governments around the world. The purpose is to urge these institutions to pressure Hanoi into releasing Mr. Hung.