

Vietnam: EU must demand end to crackdown on civil society, release of dissidents

PARIS, 17 February 2020 (VCHR & FIDH) - The European Union (EU) must use the upcoming human rights dialogue with Vietnam's government to demand an end to its crackdown on civil society, the amendment of repressive laws, and the immediate release of all political prisoners, FIDH and its member organization Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) urged today. The two organizations made the call ahead of the ninth EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue, which is set to be held on 19 February 2019 in Hanoi.

In [a new briefing paper released today](#), FIDH and VCHR detailed their human rights concerns in six key areas: 1) Escalating crackdown on dissent; 2) Repressive "national security" laws; 3) Labour rights; 4) Land disputes; 5) Inhumane prison conditions and deaths in custody; and 6) The death penalty.

"We are concerned that the EU's recent approval of trade benefits for Vietnam despite its dismal human rights record is likely to embolden Hanoi to continue its crackdown on civil society. The EU must seek concrete actions from the Vietnamese government to ensure that serious human rights violations don't become 'business as usual'," said FIDH Secretary-General Adilur Rahman Khan.

Since last year's EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue, held on 4 March 2019, Vietnamese authorities have continued to harass, assault, and detain human rights defenders, labour rights defenders, land and environmental rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, government critics, and religious followers. Between 5 March 2019 and 2 February 2020, Vietnamese authorities arrested 29 human rights activists

(including three women) and sentenced 42 (including five women) to prison terms of up to 12 years.

The Vietnamese

government has justified its ongoing crackdown by invoking clauses in the 2015 Criminal Code that criminalize activities deemed to threaten “national security.” These vaguely-worded provisions — six of which carry the death penalty as maximum sentence — make no distinction between violent crimes and the peaceful and legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

“The Vietnamese government’s lack of commitment to respect its international obligations is extremely disturbing, especially at this critical time in EU-Vietnam relations. We urge the EU to ensure that the upcoming human rights dialogue contains specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives,” said VCHR President Vo Van Ai.

Many human rights

violations in Vietnam are committed in the context of land disputes. The authorities have consistently adopted a vicious and violent approach to the resolution of these disputes. The latest instance of this trend was the Đồng Tâm incident, which resulted in the death of at least one civilian last month.

Despite being a state

party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Vietnam has failed to improve detention conditions. Reports of torture, ill-treatment, and deaths in police custody continued to be widely reported in 2019. Several prisoners died last year as a result of harsh detention conditions that may have amounted to torture or ill-treatment.

With regard to the

Quê Me

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
<https://queme.org/en/>

death penalty, Vietnam continues to apply the death penalty for a range of offenses that do not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes,” while statistics on death sentences and executions continue to be classified as “state secrets.”

[FIDH-VCHR Briefing Paper on Vietnam-EU Human Rights Dialogue 2020Download](#)

Press contacts:

FIDH: Mr. Andrea Giorgetta (English) - Tel: +66886117722 (Bangkok)

FIDH: Ms. Eva Canan (French, English) - Tel: +33648059157 (Paris)

VCHR: Ms. Penelope Faulkner (Vietnamese, English, French) - Tel: +33611898681 (Paris)