

## **At its centenary commemoration in Paris FIDH condemns grave human rights violations in Vietnam**



PARIS, 7 November 2022 (VCHR) - Human rights defenders from all over the world gathered in Paris for the 41st Congress of the FIDH (International Federation of Human

Rights). The Congress, which brought together over 450 human rights defenders from FIDH leagues in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East, also marked the 100 years of FIDH's human rights advocacy since its creation in 1922. The Opening Ceremony at the Paris Hôtel de Ville included video messages from French President Emmanuel Macron, UN Secretary-general Antonio Guterres, Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and speeches by a range of international personalities. Seventeen empty chairs were placed in honour of seventeen members of the FIDH currently in arbitrary detention, including Belarusian lawyer Ales Bialiatski, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

### Examining

situations of particular concern around the world, FIDH delegates unanimously adopted a resolution condemning human rights violations and repression of human rights defenders in Vietnam (*see full text below*).



Alice Mogwe, FIDH President (Photo Baptiste Cottureau / FIDH)

FIDH President Alice Mogwe, a prominent Botswana activist who was elected for a second term at the Congress, described FIDH's creation in the wake of the First World War: *"On 28th May 1922, on the initiative of the French and the German Leagues of Human Rights, human rights organizations from 10 European countries gathered in Paris to create a movement to promote peace through human rights and cooperation amongst nations, to ensure that never again such horrors should occur. Today, the FIDH has grown into an international federation with 192 leagues in 117 countries all over the world, with many leagues in Asia, including Vietnam"*.

The 2022 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Ales Bialiatski (former FIDH Vice-President), the Russian organization Memorial and the Centre for Civil Liberties from Ukraine – all members of the FIDH – came as a meaningful tribute to the organization's work. *"The Nobel Peace Prize this year is a wonderful recognition of this fight. It is the prize of resistance. Resistance against totalitarianism, and against all attempts to silence the voices of all those who dare to stand up and denounce human rights violations from the past and present. It is a prize of everyday heroes, the prize for those who fight for human rights, sometimes at great personal risk. It is a wonderful tribute to the courage, determination and the fundamentally positive role that human rights defenders play in situations of repression or conflict. For they are the change-makers for peace and justice"* said FIDH President Alice Mogwe.



Video Message from French President Emmanuel Macron at the FIDH Opening Ceremony, 23rd October 2022

As the world's very first international non-governmental human rights organization, the FIDH has made significant contributions to the protection of human rights and the creation and strengthening of global human rights mechanisms. One of its eminent members, René Cassin, helped to draft the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, made public in Paris on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, which since became International Human Rights Day. FIDH played a key role in advocating for the creation of an International Criminal Court, which was finally established in 2002.

FIDH's engagement for Vietnam dates back to the 1920s, when it intervened to abrogate the death sentence on Vietnamese patriots Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh who were condemned to death for their pursuit of Vietnam's independence from colonial rule. In 1989, FIDH invited the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) to join the organization. VCHR's President Võ Văn Ái remained Vice-President of the FIDH for 18 years. Together, the FIDH and VCHR have continued to raise Vietnam's grave human rights abuses in international fora such as the European Parliament and the

United Nations, and to support human rights defenders on the ground.



Opening session of the FIDH 41st Congress. From left to right : Éléonore Morel, FIDH Executive Director, Juliane Falloux, FIDH Deputy Executive Director, Maryse Artiguelong, Vice-President of the French League for Human Rights (LDH), Alice Mogwe, FIDH President, Võ Trần Nhật, VCHR Executive Secretary (Photo Baptiste Cottereau / FIDH)

During the 41<sup>st</sup> Congress, held from 23 to 27 October, FIDH unanimously adopted a “Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Vietnam 2022”. The resolution denounced the use of restrictive legislation to criminalise human rights and legalise arbitrary detention, and deplored the repression of civil society activists under fallacious criminal charges. Specifically, it raised the cases of environmental rights defenders **Mai Phan Lợi, Bạch Hùng Dương, Đặng Đình Bách** and **Ngụy Thị Khanh**, imprisoned on trumped-up charges of “tax evasion”, and independent journalist **Phạm Chí Dũng**, condemned to 15 years in prison for calling on the European Parliament to postpone ratification of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement pending concrete human rights progress in Vietnam.

The resolution also expressed FIDH members' deep concern about the use of the death penalty in Vietnam, with executions doubling over the past 10 years, and the inhuman conditions of executions and detention on death row.

*Full  
text of the Resolution:*

## **Resolution on the human rights situation in Vietnam 2022**

### **FIDH and its leagues gathered for its 41st Congress in Paris, France,**

**- Considering**

**that** during the past three years at least 95 activists, dissidents and human rights defenders, including 17 women, have been arrested and 113, including 17 women, have been sentenced to up to 15 years in prison,

**- Considering**

**that** Vietnam is adopting and enforcing laws and regulations that are incompatible with its obligations under the International Human Rights Charter (such as Articles of the Criminal Code on threats against 'national security', the Press Law, the Law on Belief and Religion, the Cybersecurity Law and provisions to counter supposed "fake news" on social media networks) and justifies its violent acts and human rights violations by claiming '*they comply with the law*',

- **Noting**

**that** “the law” to which the Vietnamese authorities repeatedly refer remains an extremely broad concept that may include decisions or resolutions of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), and that the laws themselves are so vague and imprecise that they can encompass all forms of behavior ranging from the most reprehensible to the most legitimate,

- **Considering**

**that** these regulations limit the space in which both Vietnamese and international NGOs can operate freely in Vietnam by imposing registration and financing criteria aimed at restricting and controlling the role of civil society, notably in the fields of human rights and the environment,

- **Alarmed**

by the recent arbitrary arrests and sentencing of environmental rights defenders **Mai Phan Lợi, Bạch Hùng Dương, Đặng Đình Bách** and **Nguy Thi Khanh** to between two and five years in prison on the pretext of tax evasion, when they had simply criticized the government’s pro-coal energy policy,

- **Considering**

**that** reform underway of Decree 72/2013/ND-CP on the use and management of the Internet is designed to further undermine freedom of expression and press freedom online, notably by obliging operators to remove all ‘illegal content’ within 24 hours,

- **Considering**

**that** the number of executions in Vietnam is the highest in Southeast Asia and that it continues to rise, doubling within a decade; that Vietnam ranks amongst the countries with the highest rate of death

sentences and executions in the world; that detention centres for prisoners condemned to death are overcrowded and that the wait on death row remains 'extremely long' even by the Vietnamese authorities' own admission, and that death penalties are handed down by courts in which the right to defence is not guaranteed,

**- Considering**

**that** a number of crimes liable to capital punishment are political crimes defined in vague and arbitrary terms which can encompass the legitimate and peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms, for example the provisions of Article 109 of the Criminal Code which criminalise the mere intention to criticise the government,

**- Considering**

the risk of inhumane treatment during executions conducted by lethal injection using unspecified products, given that Vietnam had to introduce a decree requiring an execution to be suspended if the person convicted had not died after 30 minutes and the administering of three lethal doses,

**Condemn** the systematic repression of any dissenting voice or differing point of view and the on-going assault on Vietnamese civil society as a whole, including the harassment and arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists and other activists, who are sometimes condemned to extremely harsh prison sentences (such as 15 years in prison for the dissident Phạm Chí Dũng), the brutal dispersal of peaceful demonstrations, Internet censorship, etc.,

**Express****particular concern**

at the conviction of environmental activists for 'tax evasion', which is clearly a pretext, and point out that their

activities constitute the exercise of the legitimate right to participate in public life and serve the public interest,

**Condemn** the use by the Vietnamese authorities of what they claim is “the law” to justify actions which blatantly flout the most fundamental rights, and to legitimise arbitrary practices to the detriment of Vietnamese citizens and civil society,

**Require** in this respect that domestic laws and regulations be immediately brought into line with Vietnam’s international human rights obligations; invite the Vietnamese authorities to work in good faith with the UN and the international community to this end; call on Vietnam to abandon forthwith amendments to Decree 72 which impose further curbs to internet freedom,

**Condemn** the unacceptable and dangerous restrictions imposed on both local and international NGOs in Vietnam, particularly relating to their financing and freedom of action,

**Demand** a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it, reducing the number of crimes, particularly political crimes, liable to incur capital punishment; urge the government, in the interests of transparency, to publish all relevant information concerning the death penalty in Vietnam, including statistics on the numbers condemned to death, executions and those held on death row, the products used in lethal injections, etc.),

**Demand** that the European Union, which has links with Vietnam through the 2020 Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), use all means at

## **Quê Me**

Quê Me: Action for democracy in Vietnam & Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

<https://queme.org/en/>

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its disposal to press

Vietnam to respect its undertakings on fair trade and development, particularly in the field of workers' rights and the environment. ---