

[RFA] NGO Hits Back at Vietnam's Denials of Rights Abuses



Nguyen Khanh Ngoc (L), Vietnamese government delegate, addresses the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, March 11, 2019. UN Photo

[RFA, 13/3/2019](#) - Assertions by Vietnam that it protects civil freedoms and human rights in the one-party communist state were sharply rebutted on Monday by a monitoring group at a U.N. review of the country's rights record held this week in Geneva, Switzerland.

Speaking on

March 11 at a hearing of the U.N. Human Rights Committee, a Paris-based rights group said that a Vietnamese government report to the Committee this year obscures “glaring evidence” of state abuses.

“Much of the information in the report is obsolete,” [Vo Van Ai--president of the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights \(VCHR\)--told the U.N. Human Rights Committee](#), a body created to check U.N. member states’ compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

“Moreover, it denies glaring evidence of the government’s brutal assault on civil society, escalation of arbitrary arrests and long prison sentences for all those who simply advocate the rights enshrined in the ICCPR,” Ai said.

Rejecting

Vietnamese government claims to the Committee that provisions of the ICCPR take precedence over domestic law in Vietnam, Ai noted that Vietnamese authorities have “emptied the Covenant of its substance by subordinating it to [the country’s] Constitution.”

“[This] conditions the exercise of human rights on the ‘interests of the state’ and ‘national security,’” and applies to all new laws adopted by Vietnam, Ai said.

“These vague, catch-all ‘national security’ provisions are in fact a legal veneer to suppress human rights,” Ai said, adding, “They make no distinction between violent acts and the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression, and transform peaceful human rights advocates into criminals.”

Convictions

under Article 109 of Vietnam's criminal code, prohibiting "activities aimed at overthrowing the people's government," continue to increase, with citizens calling for multi-party democracy and separation of government powers now deemed guilty of subversion, Ai noted.

"For

Vietnam, pluralism is synonymous with a threat to the existence of the Communist Party," he said.

Delayed reports, failures to comply

Though

Vietnam acceded to the ICCPR in 1982, it has now reported on its compliance with that human rights instrument only three times, Ai said.

"By

delaying its reports over decades, Vietnam is not only failing to comply with UN reporting obligations, but also seriously undermining opportunities to strengthen protection of its citizens' civil and political rights."

This week's

meeting in Geneva follows a meeting in January by the larger U.N. Human Rights Council, a separate body, in which Vietnam defended its rights record, calling the ensuring of human rights its "top priority" and denying it is arresting rights defenders.

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Rights Council documents on Vietnam, however, record mounting concern over recent years about arrests.

Reported by RFA's Vietnamese Service. Written in English by Richard Finney.