

## ***BBC Online* : Vietnam dissidents win freedom**

Three relatives of a jailed Vietnamese dissident who were accused of passing information abroad about his arrest have had their prison sentences cut short.

Brothers Nguyen Vu Viet and Nguyen Truc Cuong, who were imprisoned for five and four years respectively in September, had their terms cut by the Ho Chi Minh City People's Supreme Court to 32 months on appeal, a court clerk said.

They will both be released within the next week.

Their sister, Nguyen Thi Hoa, had her three-year sentence cut to four months and six days, and was released from custody.

They were accused of providing information by email and telephone to overseas Vietnamese organisations about the situation of their uncle, long-term government critic Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, a Catholic priest.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Dung said the three had "sincerely confessed their crimes and appeared to repent their wrongdoing" during the appeals trial.

Their case was highlighted in a report criticising Vietnam's treatment of internet users this week by London-based rights group Amnesty International.

The verdict also comes two days after European Union diplomats in annual human rights talks with the government demanded "concrete steps and improvements on the ground".

Suspicious

There are thought to be around 2.5 million internet users out of a population of 80 million in Vietnam.

Amnesty said the government was keen to promote internet use as part of the country's economic development, but was suspicious of its other uses.

It said that websites had been blocked, e-mails monitored and internet cafe owners encouraged to report the activities of users.

The organisation estimated that since 2001, at least 10 people using the internet to criticise government policies through emails or websites had been arrested.