

# **Vietnamese court upholds Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh prominent blogger's 10-year jail term - Statement of concern by scholars and professionals**

Saturday 2 December 2017, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#), [Reuters Staff](#) (Date first published: 30 November 2017).

HANOI (Reuters) - A Vietnamese court on Thursday upheld a 10-year jail sentence for a prominent blogger convicted of publishing propaganda against the state, her lawyer said, the latest move in a crackdown on critics of the one-party state.

Despite sweeping economic reform and increasing openness towards social change, including gay, lesbian and transgender rights, Vietnam's ruling Communist Party retains tight media censorship and does not tolerate criticism.

In recent months, it has targeted critics whose voices have been amplified by social media in a country that ranks among Facebook's top ten, in terms of users.

Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, 37, known as "Me Nam" (Mother Mushroom), who gained prominence for blogging about environment issues and deaths in police custody, was found guilty in June for distributing what police called anti-state reports.

A court in the central city of Nha Trang upheld Quynh's sentence, one of her lawyers said.

"This sentence is not objective and is unfair," the lawyer, Ha Huy Son, told Reuters by telephone.

"Quynh said she is innocent and she carried out her right as a citizen."

Vietnam's state news agency confirmed the outcome of the appeal. The hearing was public and "in accordance with Vietnamese law", foreign ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang added.

Quynh's mother said she was among those outside the court protesting against the verdict when plainclothes policemen approached and beat them.

"The police beat me repeatedly," Nguyen Tuyet Lan, the mother, told Reuters, adding that police detained three activists.

Reuters was not able to reach police for comment.

In March 2009, Quynh spent nine days in police detention for receiving funds from Viet Tan, a California-based activist group which Vietnam calls a terrorist group, to print T-shirts with slogans against a major bauxite project, police said.

She has also spoken out against a subsidiary of Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corp that caused one of Vietnam's biggest environmental disasters in April.

The European Union, whose representatives were denied access to the appeal hearing, urged that Quynh be “immediately and unconditionally released”, its Vietnam delegation said on Friday, ahead of an annual human rights session in Hanoi.

A U.S. diplomat in Vietnam said she was “deeply troubled” that Quynh’s conviction was upheld.

“The United States calls on Vietnam to release Ms Quynh and all prisoners of conscience immediately, and to allow all individuals in Vietnam to express their views freely and assemble peacefully,” Caryn McClelland, the U.S. chargé d’affaires, said in a statement.

New York-based Human Rights Watch called the hearing a farce.

“The proceedings were a farce, with the judge simply going through the motions before issuing the harsh verdict predetermined by the ruling communist party, upholding her long prison sentence,” said Phil Robertson, the group’s deputy director for Asia.

### **Reuters Staff**

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\* NOVEMBER 30, 2017 / 6:53 AM / :

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-court/vietnamese-court-upholds-prominent-bloggers-10-year-jail-term-idUSKBN1DU0HP?il=0>

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## **Statement of concern over the case of Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh and Trần Thị Nga by scholars and professionals around the world**

Launched October 4 2017

**Statement of concern (below) to request the Vietnamese government to release Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh (Me Nam) and Trần Thị Nga on legal and humanitarian grounds.**

Mr. Trần Đại Quang, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Ms. Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân, Chairman of the National Assembly

Mr. Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister

Mr. Nguyễn Phú Trọng, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party

Cc: Foreign Embassies in Hanoi

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are deeply concerned about the charges and sentences against Ms. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, also known as blogger Mẹ Nấm, and Ms. Trần Thị Nga.

According to Vietnam’s state media, Ms. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, arrested in October 2016, and Ms. Trần Thị Nga, arrested in January 2017, were accused of “posting articles, video clips and documents containing anti-state propaganda on Facebook, YouTube and other social media, giving interviews with foreign media outlets ‘distorting’ the situation in Vietnam”.

The charges violate the right to freedom of expression as provided in international human rights law that Vietnam is bound to respect. Nevertheless, Vietnam's courts sentenced Ms. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh on 6/29/2017 and Ms. Trần Thị Nga on 7/25/2017 to ten years' and nine years' imprisonment, respectively. These are particularly heavy sentences against the two women who are mothers with children under 10 years old, for activities that should not and must not have been criminalized in the first place.

For legal and humanitarian reasons, we strongly request that Ms. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh and Ms. Trần Thị Nga be immediately and unconditionally released.

While the country is prepared to host APEC 2017, it is important to recognize that APEC goals for "sustainable economic growth and prosperity" are based on a fundamental respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all persons. As friends of Vietnam, we urge the authorities to reconsider their position on all prisoners of conscience in Vietnam and resolve differences through dialogue and constructive engagement. That approach will accelerate Vietnam's progress and development.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and trust that you will respond in a manner that reflects the civility and dignity of Vietnam.

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