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## **VIET NAM**

### **GRAVE FEARS FOR ACTIVIST CẦN THỊ THÊU'S HEALTH IN PRISON**

Cần Thị Thêu, a prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience, has been jailed for five years. She recently told her family about serious health problems. Reports also suggest she has been tortured and held in inhumane conditions.

Thêu and her two sons were arrested in 2020. Authorities sentenced them to between 8 and 10 years in prison under Article 117 of the Criminal Code, accusing them of "*opposing the State of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.*"

Before their arrest, Thêu and her family spoke out against forced evictions. They became leading voices in Viet Nam's land rights movement.

Now, there are grave concerns for her safety. Without proper medical care, her life could be at risk. Thêu is imprisoned only for exercising her human rights. She must be released immediately and unconditionally.

#### **Write to the State President of Viet Nam urging him to:**

- immediately and unconditionally release Cần Thị Thêu, who is detained solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression.
- ensure that, until her release, she is treated in line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), protected from torture and ill-treatment, and given access to adequate healthcare.
- release Trịnh Bá Phương and Trịnh Bá Tư, and quash their convictions and sentences linked to the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

#### **Write to:**

State President Lương Cường  
Văn phòng chủ tịch nước, số 2,  
Hùng Vương, Ba Đình,  
Hà Nội, 10020, Việt Nam.  
*Salutation: Your Excellency,*

#### **And copy:**

His Excellency Vinh Quang Pham  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
55 Mackay Street  
Ottawa, ON K1M 2B2  
Tel: (613) 236-0772  
Email: [info@vietnamembassy.ca](mailto:info@vietnamembassy.ca)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Cần Thị Thêu is a well-known land rights activist and human rights defender in Viet Nam. Her activism began in 2010, after authorities confiscated her family's land. She soon became a leading figure in the land rights movement.

Together with her family, Thêu supported victims of land grabbing, human rights violations, and political imprisonment. They documented cases on social media, reaching more than 50,000 followers. They also shared human rights reports, including on land rights and freedom of expression, with international communities.

Over a decade of activism, Thêu and her family faced constant harassment and surveillance. She was jailed twice before her most recent arrest—15 months in 2014 for leading a protest against a land grab, and 20 months in 2016 for filming a forced eviction. Her husband was also jailed in 2014.

After their parents' imprisonment, her sons, Trịnh Bá Phương and Trịnh Bá Tư, became activists themselves. Once released, Thêu resumed her advocacy alongside them and her husband.

Tensions rose after the family spoke out about the high-profile land dispute in Đồng Tâm village between 2017 and 2020. In January 2020, a violent police raid left an 84-year-old village leader and three police officers dead, with dozens of villagers arrested. State media censored coverage, but Thêu and her sons used social media to expose the truth and document abuses.

As a result, police arrested Thêu, Phương, and Tư on June 24, 2020. At the time, Phương's newborn son was just four days old. In May 2021, Thêu and Tư were sentenced to eight years in prison and three years' probation. In December 2021, Phương received a 10-year prison sentence with five years' probation. All were convicted under Article 117 of the Criminal Code for "opposing the State." Since 2011, at least 300 activists, human rights defenders, and journalists have been prosecuted under this law.

During pre-trial detention, reports surfaced of severe mistreatment. Police allegedly beat Phương's genitals and caused kidney damage to Tư, who later staged a 20-day hunger strike. Thêu developed a chronic eye infection after being held in stifling conditions with poor ventilation and little water.

The abuse continued after sentencing. The three were transferred to prisons up to 1,000 km from home, making visits costly and rare. Family contact was first allowed only in March 2022. Later that year, Tư was beaten, shackled, and placed in solitary confinement for 10 days after advocating for another prisoner's access to emergency healthcare.

Amnesty International condemned their arbitrary arrests and unfair trials in 2021 and raised grave concerns about their treatment in 2022. UN experts also expressed alarm in June 2022, warning of systematic violations against Viet Nam's human rights defenders, including arbitrary detention, unfair trials, and criminalization of free expression.

***Please take action as soon as possible until December 10, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***