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WATCH

NO COUNTRY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Assaults on Bloggers and Democracy Campaigners in Vietnam



No Country for Human Rights Activists

Assaults on Bloggers and Democracy Campaigners in Vietnam

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Summary

In celebration of International Human Rights Day, on the morning of December 6, 2015, the prominent lawyer and human rights activist Nguyen Van Dai delivered a talk at Van Loc parish in Nam Dan district, Nghe An province, about the rights enshrined in Vietnam's Constitution. That afternoon, he left for Hanoi, accompanied by fellow activists Ly Quang Son, Vu Van Minh (also known as Vu Duc Minh), and Le Manh Thang. During the course of the journey, their taxi was forcibly stopped by a group of roughly a dozen men wearing civilian clothing and disguised by surgical masks. Nguyen Van Dai says the men dragged them out of the taxi, beating them with wooden sticks on their thighs and shoulders, and forced him into their car. The beating continued inside the car:

They slapped me on my face continuously, and hit me on my ears and my mouth. Once the car arrived at Cua Lo beach, they stripped me of my jacket and shoes, pushed me out onto the beach and left.

The three other rights activists were also severely beaten. According to Ly Quang Son:

The thugs dragged Vu Van Minh out [of the car] and hit him repeatedly in the legs with a stick.... They also dragged Thang out of the car, hitting him in the chest with a stick. Minh tried to hold on to Thang and I tried to grab their sticks. Then another thug whipped me on my hand and I had to release the stick. I used my feet to kick them about the face and head, but they struck me on my ankles, shins, and calves. Minh was unable to hold on to Thang.

Ly Quang Son reported that the men drove Le Manh Thang away in a car to an unknown location, took his cell phone and wallet, and abandoned him by the side of the road. During the trip, the men punched Thang repeatedly in his face and body. According to Nguyen Van Dai and Ly Quang Son, the taxi driver was also beaten by the men.

The December 6 incident was not the first time Nguyen Van Dai had been attacked in this way. In May 2014, while in a café in Hanoi along with several rights activists, a group of

men appeared, threw a glass at him, and beat him. In January and March 2015, groups of men attacked his house and tried to break down the door.

The attacks on Nguyen Van Dai and his colleagues illustrate a disturbing trend in Vietnam: physical assaults on activists by groups of men who appear to act at the direction of or with the acquiescence of officials. To date, most authoritative assessments of human rights conditions in Vietnam have relied on measures of formal judicial repression (data on arrests, trials, convictions, and sentences imposed by Communist Party-controlled courts or officials acting in their formal capacities), and give too little attention to the frequency and significance of the kind of attacks documented here, effectively a form of extra-judicial repression.

This report attempts to fill in the gap, documenting 36 recent cases in which human rights activists were beaten by “thugs” in Vietnam. All the accounts are based on online sources, including eyewitness accounts of assaults posted on Vietnamese-language blogs and social media, often with photographic evidence, as well as on foreign media accounts, cross-checked against other independent accounts of the same incidents wherever possible.

All the assaults documented here took place between January 2015 and April 2017. In many cases, the assaults took place in plain view of uniformed police officers who did not intervene. Some of the beatings took place in the presence of uniformed officers within the confines of a police station. In many of the cases, the assaults took place in tandem with and seemingly in support of official repressive measures against the activists in question. In almost all the cases, the activists targeted by “thugs” were also targeted for arrest and other forms of official repression.

While the precise links between the thugs and the government are usually impossible to pin down, in a tightly controlled police state there is little or no doubt that they are aligned with and serving at the behest of state security services.

Physical attacks against human rights activists and bloggers in Vietnam are not a new phenomenon. For example, upon returning to Vietnam in December 2005 from a trip to the United States for medical treatment, the late dissident Hoang Minh Chinh and his family

were set upon by a mob of about 50 people. The mob cursed Hoang Minh Chinh for publicly criticizing rights violations in Vietnam while he was overseas. They used wooden sticks to break down the door and to smash the windows of his home; threw rotten shrimp paste, tomatoes, and eggs into his house; and kicked and hit members of his family. The family called the police; police officers came but simply witnessed the attack, doing nothing to stop it.

Other prominent rights bloggers and activists have suffered physical assault prior to the period covered by this report, including prominent former political prisoners Huynh Ngoc Tuan, Le Quoc Quan, Truong Minh Duc, Nguyen Bac Truyen, Pham Ba Hai, Bui Thi Minh Hang, Pham Thanh Nghien, Do Thi Minh Hanh and Le Thi Cong Nhan, and activists Nguyen Hoang Vi, Le Quoc Quyet, Duong Thi Tan, Ngo Duy Quyen, Pham Le Vuong Cac, Huynh Thuc Vy, and many others.

Information about these kinds of attacks is incomplete because of limitations on access to Vietnam and censorship of the media. Human Rights Watch research has found that in 2013, Vietnam convicted at least 65 rights activists and bloggers and sentenced them collectively to several hundred years in prison. During that same year, according to a report issued by the Association of Former Prisoners of Conscience (Hoi Cuu Tu nhan Luong tam), at least 18 physical attacks were carried out against 71 rights campaigners.

In 2014, during an especially contentious phase of negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership between Vietnam and the United States, the number of people convicted for political crimes in Vietnam decreased to 31. However, according to the Association of Former Prisoners of Conscience, the number of physical attacks increased to at least 31 incidents targeting 135 rights bloggers and activists.

In 2015, the number of reported convictions continued to decrease, with only seven activists convicted throughout the year. On the other hand, according to research by Human Rights Watch, roughly 50 bloggers and activists reported that they were assaulted in 20 separate incidents. In 2016, at least 21 rights campaigners were convicted while at least 20 physical assaults were carried out against more than 50 people.

Physical attacks against rights campaigners usually take place in four different situations. The first is an attack against a single individual, either at home or on the street. Examples

include attacks against Father Nguyen Van The in May 2016, Nguyen Van Thanh in June 2016, La Viet Dung in July 2016, and Nguyen Trung Ton in February 2017.

A second situation is when a group of rights activists suffers an attack, often for carrying out acts in support of fellow activists, such as visiting a recently released political prisoner or attending a wedding of a rights campaigner. Examples of these attacks include assaults against visitors of political prisoners Tran Anh Kim in January 2015 and Tran Minh Nhat in August 2015.

A third situation involves attacks against activists for participating in public events such as pro-environment protests, or demonstrations outside local police stations demanding the release of fellow activists.

A fourth context is inside police stations, as with the reported beatings of Tran Thi Hong and Truong Minh Tam in April 2016 while they were being detained for interrogation.

In many incidents, assailants are reported to have worn surgical masks. In some cases, as noted above, activists report that uniformed police were present, but did nothing to stop the attack. In almost all cases, no one is held responsible for the attacks. Many activists have made reports to the police about the attacks, but few if any investigations seem to have been carried out; Human Rights Watch is aware of only one case in which the attackers and local police leaders alleged to be responsible for the assault were investigated.

Despite great risks to their personal safety and freedom, the community of rights bloggers and activists continues to grow bigger and stronger in Vietnam. Aided by the internet, particularly social networks such as Facebook and YouTube, rights campaigners increasingly are in contact and support one another in their struggles for political freedom and basic rights.

Numerous rights groups have been founded within the last five years, including the pro-democracy No-U Football Club, the Association of Gourd and Squash Mutual Assistance (Hoi Bau bi Tuong than), Vietnamese Women for Human Rights (Hoi Phu nu Nhan quyen Viet Nam), the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (Hoi Nha bao Doc lap Viet Nam), Former Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience (Hoi Cuu Tu nhan Luong tam Viet Nam),

the Brotherhood for Democracy (Hoi Anh em Dan chu), and the Association for Support of Victims of Torture (Hoi Ho tro Nan nhan Bao hanh).

In addition to carrying out traditional rights activities such as staging peaceful protests, publishing writings critical of the government, and signing open petitions, bloggers and activists visit families of political prisoners or activists in need and provide small but meaningful financial support. They wait at airports to welcome home fellow activists who return from advocacy trips abroad and are frequently detained by police. They go to police stations to demand the release of fellow activists detained for participating in peaceful protests. Brutal repression, including the physical attacks documented in this report, have certainly deterred some in Vietnam from activism, but many others have courageously continued to call for the creation of a rights-respecting democracy.

Key Recommendations

To the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

- Leaders at national, provincial, and local levels should publicly and unambiguously condemn physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such acts are illegal and will not be tolerated, and that anyone involved in ordering or facilitating such attacks will be held responsible.
- Leaders should immediately order thorough and impartial investigations of all cases in which rights bloggers and activists are assaulted, intimidated, or threatened; prosecutors should bring charges against all persons credibly implicated in the attacks and other criminal acts.
- Leaders at the national level should hold provincial and local leaders accountable for acts of violence against rights bloggers and activists that occur under their watch.

To the Vietnamese National Assembly (VNA)

- The VNA should issue a resolution that publicly and unambiguously condemns physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such acts are illegal and will not be tolerated.
- The VNA should repeal or amend provisions in the penal code that criminalize peaceful dissent on the basis of imprecisely defined “national security” crimes, as detailed in the full recommendations section at the end of this report.

Methodology

The data presented here on physical assaults against rights bloggers and activists in Vietnam during the roughly 27-month period between January 2015 and April 2017 was obtained (and cross-checked when possible) from four kinds of sources accessed primarily through the internet:

1. foreign news services;
2. social media websites such as Facebook and YouTube;
3. independent blogs and websites based inside Vietnam; and
4. independent blogs and websites based outside of Vietnam.

These sources include a mix of anonymous and named sources. Human Rights Watch has taken pains to verify cases by cross-checking claims by victims and witnesses wherever possible with other eyewitness accounts of the same incidents reported in the media or posted on other blogs, websites, or social media.

Foreign news services used as sources in this report include Radio Free Asia (RFA), Voice of America, the BBC, Radio France Internationale, Nguoi Viet, and Saigon Broadcasting Television Network. While these news sources do not generally have staff on the ground in Vietnam, they do conduct extensive interviews through telephone and the internet with victims and eyewitnesses.

Facebook and YouTube have emerged as the key social media platforms that activists use to describe episodes of abuse and mistreatment. Among the most important independent blogs and websites outside of Vietnam are Dan Lam Bao (Citizen Journalism), Dan Luan (Citizen Discussion), and Ba Sam.

Reliable blogs and websites based in Vietnam (or run by people who live in Vietnam) include Thanh nien Cong giao (Catholic Youth), Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo (Good News for the Poor), Defend the Defenders, and Thoi bao Viet Nam.

A note on terminology: the unidentified male assailants responsible for the attacks in the cases described in this report are commonly referred to by Vietnamese sources using the

Vietnamese term “con do,” which we have translated as “thug.” Human Rights Watch’s use of the term is not meant to imply any particular profile, or identify any particular individual. Following local Vietnamese usage, Human Rights Watch uses the generic term “stick” (“gay” in Vietnamese) to refer to the weapon of choice employed by assailants. The term covers a range of informal implements including makeshift clubs, wooden rods, and bamboo rods.

I. Background

A Long History of Repression

Since the communist government was founded in 1945, it has always dealt harshly with its critics.¹ When fighting against France during the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Communist Party eliminated thousands of fellow Vietnamese who failed to support its war effort.² After the end of French colonialism and the establishment of an independent state in northern Vietnam in 1954, the Party killed thousands of “class enemies” as part of a notoriously brutal land reform program and cracked down on dozens of reformist intellectuals who called for modest political liberalization.³

During the civil war against the U.S.-backed Republic of Vietnam during the 1960s and 70s, the northern government ordered the assassination of tens of thousands of civilian “traitors” and “puppets” in the southern half of the country.⁴ The communist government was almost continuously at war during the first several decades of its existence, was ideologically opposed to liberalism, and thus tolerated little or no domestic political dissent.

With the end of the war in 1975 and the creation of a unified state, the victorious government in Hanoi engaged in harsh repression of dissidents and exercised a large program for the forced “re-education” of former soldiers, civil servants, and government officials in the South.⁵ With the introduction of economic reforms in the late 1980s,

¹ David Marr, *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945-1946)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 383-441.

² Nguyen Cong Luan, *Nationalist in the Vietnam Wars: Memoirs of a Victim Turned Soldier* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012). See also Francois Guillemot, “Autopsy of a Massacre: On a Political Purge in the Early Days of the Indochina War (Nam Bo 1947),” *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 9.2 (2010), pp. 225-265.

³ Alec G. Holcombe, “Socialist Transformation in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014). See also Alex-Thai D. Vo, “Nguyen Thi Nam and the Land Reform in North Vietnam, 1953,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol.10, issue 1 (Winter 2015), pp. 1-62; “Forum: Memories of Land Reform,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 2, issue 2 (Summer 2007), pp. 231-297; Peter Zinoman, “Nhan Van Giai Pham and Vietnamese ‘Reform Communism’ in the 1950s: A Revisionist Interpretation,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Winter 2011), pp.80-100; Kim N.B. Ninh, *World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

⁴ Stephen T. Hosmer, *Viet Cong Repression and Its Implications for the Future* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1970). See also Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.88; Nha Ca, *Mourning headband for Hue (Giai khan so cho Hue)* (Saigon: Dat Lanh, 1971).

⁵ Huy Duc, “Chapter 2: Reeducation” (“Chuong 2: Cai tao”), in *The Winning Side: I. Liberation (Ben thang cuoc: I. Giai phong)* (Los Angeles: OsinBook, 2012), pp. 29-70. See also Nguyen Van Canh, *Vietnam under Communism, 1975-1982* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1983).

government repression of dissident voices decreased, but when economic liberalization began to trigger calls for parallel reforms in the political sphere in the 1990s, the Party clamped down again.⁶

Repression has been carried out in part through a legal system that protects the Party's absolute authority and denies basic civil rights to Vietnamese citizens. The Constitution categorically affirms the supreme leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam over both the state and the people. All basic rights including freedom of speech, opinion, press, assembly, and association are restricted. Independent unions are prohibited. Religious organizations must register with the government and operate under strict bureaucratic supervision. Socio-political groups disliked by the government can be easily shut down.

The authorities use various means to curb political activism, including physical and psychological harassment, police surveillance, extra-judicial house arrest, and the application of pressure on employers, landlords, and family members of activists.⁷ State agents have been known to pressure spouses, parents, and siblings to persuade rights bloggers and activists to stop their activities. Police often subject rights campaigners to lengthy, bullying interrogation sessions. The authorities frequently detain rights advocates for long periods without access to legal counsel or family visits.

The government also takes advantage of vaguely worded provisions in its penal codes to imprison peaceful political and religious dissidents. These laws target people for “aiming to overthrow the people’s administration” (penal code article 79, penalty up to death sentence); “undermining national unity policy” (article 87, penalty up to 15 years in prison); “conducting propaganda against the State” (article 88, penalty up to 20 years); and “disrupting security” (article 89, penalty up to 15 years). It also employs “supplemental punishments” which strip former prisoners convicted of “national security” crimes of certain rights, puts them on probation, and allows the confiscation of their property (article 92). Other articles in the penal code used to target peaceful dissenters include sanctions against “abusing rights of democracy and freedom to infringe upon the interests of the State” (article 258) or “disrupting public order” (article 245). Bogus

⁶ Robert Templer, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999). See also Human Rights Watch, *Rural Unrest in Vietnam* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997), <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1997/vietnm/>.

⁷ “Vietnam: Stop Cyber Attacks Against Online Critics,” Human Rights Watch news release, May 26, 2010, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/05/26/vietnam-stop-cyber-attacks-against-online-critics>.

charges of tax evasion are also commonly used against political dissidents. In November 2015, the National Assembly passed revisions to the penal code.⁸ Instead of repealing articles contrary to human rights standards, lawmakers introduced even harsher provisions, such as adding a new punishment to several of these articles that states, “The person who takes actions in preparation of committing this crime shall be subject to between one and five years of imprisonment.” As of March 2017, the revised penal code has not come into force.

As of the time of writing there were approximately 110 known political prisoners in Vietnam. During 2016, at least 21 critics and activists were convicted for carrying out peaceful acts of free expression. Sentences ranged from three to 13 years in prison. Those imprisoned include prominent bloggers Nguyen Huu Vinh (also known as Ba Sam) and Nguyen Dinh Ngoc (also known as Nguyen Ngoc Gia), and activists Tran Anh Kim, Le Thanh Tung and Can Thi Theu.⁹ At least 14 other rights activists and bloggers, including the lawyer Nguyen Van Dai and fellow activist Le Thu Ha, bloggers Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, Ho Van Hai, and Tran Thi Nga were detained but had not yet faced trial as of March 2017.¹⁰

⁸ In November 2015, the National Assembly passed a revised penal code which includes even harsher provisions for some offenses, including offenses under article 109 (originally article 79); article 117 (originally article 88); and article 118 (originally article 89). Each has a clause that states, “The person who takes actions in preparation of committing this crime shall be subject to between one and five years of imprisonment.” However, the revisions were not in effect at time of writing.

⁹ “Vietnam: 7 Convicted in One Week,” Human Rights Watch news release, April 4, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/04/vietnam-7-convicted-one-week>; “Banned, Censored, Harassed, and Jailed,” Human Rights Watch news release, October 13, 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/10/13/banned-censored-harassed-and-jailed>; “Vietnam: Drop Charges and Free Land Rights Activist,” Human Rights Watch news release, September 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/17/vietnam-drop-charges-and-free-land-rights-activist>.

¹⁰ “Vietnam: Hold Elections for Country’s Leaders,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 19, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/19/vietnam-hold-elections-countrys-leaders>; “Vietnam: Reform Criminal Law to Respect Rights,” Human Rights Watch news release, October 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/17/vietnam-reform-criminal-law-respect-rights>; “Vietnam: New Wave of Arrests of Critics,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 27, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/27/vietnam-new-wave-arrests-critics>.

II. Beating of Bloggers and Activists

This chapter provides descriptions of 36 cases in which political bloggers and activists were physically assaulted by anonymous “thugs” during the 27-month period between January 2015 and April 2017. The accompanying photographs attest to the gravity of the assaults. With the exception of the case of Father Dang Huu Nam, there is no evidence in any of the cases that investigations were undertaken by the police, let alone that perpetrators were punished.

Attacks on Huynh Thanh Phat and Tran Hoang Phuc, April 13, 2017

Rights activist Huynh Thanh Phat, 18, and Tran Hoang Phuc, 23, were waiting at a bus stop in Ba Don (Quang Binh province) when a group of men in civilian clothes wearing surgical masks attacked them. The men used shirts to cover the faces of Huynh Thanh Phat and Tran Hoang Phuc, pushed them into a small van, and drove them away. During the ride, the men continuously beat Phat and Phuc. Phat recalled:

They beat us once about every 10 minutes while the car was moving. They hit us on our ears, temples, heads, ribs, backbone, and chest.¹¹

Phuc wrote on his Facebook page that, “They slapped me, punched me in my ribs and thighs.”¹² The two activists were taken to a deserted area in the forest where according to Phuc, the men “used bamboo sticks and belts to whip them.”¹³ The men took the activists’ wallets and cell phones and abandoned them there.¹⁴

This was not the first time Huynh Thanh Phat had been beaten. On May 10, 2016, he was detained by the police of Ward 1, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, and interrogated without legal counsel or any family representative present. Phat was 17 at the time. He was

¹¹ “Two young social activists were kidnapped by ‘police thugs’ and brutally assaulted” (“Hai thanh nien hoat dong xa hoi tre tuoi bi ‘con an’ bat coc va hanh hung da man”), “Dan lam bao” (blog), April 21, 2017, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2017/04/hai-thanh-nien-hoat-ong-xa-hoi-tre-tuoi.html> (accessed April 24, 2017).

¹² Tran Hoang Phuc, “How was I beaten” (“Minh bi dap nhu the nao”), posted on Tran Hoang Phuc’s Facebook page, April 14, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/phuctranbb123/posts/742207192623116?pnref=story> (accessed April 24, 2017).

¹³ “Two young social activists were kidnapped by ‘police thugs’ and brutally assaulted.”

¹⁴ Ibid.



Tran Hoang Phuc (left) after being assaulted in Quang Binh on April 13, 2017. Photo taken from a YouTube video posted by Dan Lam Bao. © 2017 Private/Dan Lam Bao; Huynh Thanh Phat (right) after being assaulted in Ho Chi Minh City on May 10, 2016. © 2016 Private

questioned about his alleged involvement in pro-environment protests on May 1 and May 8.¹⁵ Phat was released around 11 p.m. On his way home, two men wearing surgical masks and in civilian clothing stopped Phat and attacked him.¹⁶ He suffered cuts over and under his left eye.

In December 2015, Huynh Thanh Phat and other activists went to Hoa Thanh police station to demand the release of fellow activist Hoang Duc Binh, who had been detained earlier that day for distributing workers’ rights leaflets. Huynh Thanh Phat told a reporter at Radio Free Asia (RFA) what happened when they arrived at the Hoa Thanh police station:

Many traffic police, mobile police, members of the civilian defense force, and security agents in civilian clothing prevented us from entering. We tried to enter. They said: “We are common people.” Then they began to beat us freely in front of the police [in uniform]. These people started to beat me outside alley No.70 all the way to the nearby police station, about 50 meters away. Once I was inside [the police station], they handcuffed me,

¹⁵ Nguyen Tuan Khanh, “What do we share online?” (“Chia se tren mang de lam gi?”), post to “Nguyen Tuan Khanh” (blog), May 31, 2016, <https://nhacsituankhanh.wordpress.com/2016/05/31/chia-se-tren-mang-de-lam-gi/> (accessed June 1, 2016).

¹⁶ Ibid. See also Nhat ky Yeu nuoc group’s Facebook page on May 11, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/nhatkyyeunuoc1/photos/pcb.1372868659406544/1372866426073434/?type=3> (accessed June 6, 2016). Huynh Thanh Phat also posted a photo of himself after the beating to his Facebook page on May 12, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=826334880804175&set=a.372803222824012.1073741827.100002830128087&type=3&theater> (accessed June 6, 2016).

pushed me against a wall, and beat me again. There were between a dozen and 20 men, tall and big, who kept saying “I am a common person” and beat me without telling me the cause. I did not understand why the men in civilian clothing who called themselves “common people” had handcuffs to handcuff me while the police were watching. One police officer in uniform also joined them to beat me. I recall his name being Pham Khac Dong.¹⁷

Huynh Thanh Phat has also previously been detained by the police and assaulted on two other occasions. The first time was in January 2016 when he tried to attend a public commemoration of the naval battle between South Vietnam and China over the Paracel Islands in 1974. This event was organized by rights activists at the Tran Hung Dao monument in Ho Chi Minh City.¹⁸ Huynh Thanh Phat told a freelance reporter:

A number of agents in civilian clothing rushed over and struck me on my face and my body. They held me by my neck, pulled me into a car, and took me to a police station.¹⁹

The second attack was on May 1, 2016, when Phat was attending a pro-environment protest in Ho Chi Minh City.²⁰ Several men snatched and threw his glasses onto the ground, dragged him by his hair into a car, and took him to the police station of Ward 7, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City.²¹ According to Phat, at the police station a man named Huynh Van Phuc beat him with his hand and with a book.²² On May 14, 2016, the police of Ho Chi Minh City held a press conference and accused Phat and other protesters with being

¹⁷ Tuong An, “Being brutally beaten for distributing leaflets which quoted the prime minister’s statement” (“Bi danh da man vi phat to roi trich loi cua thu tuong”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, December 26, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/vta122615-12262015153906.html (accessed February 5, 2016). See also Dan lam bao, “Many activists in Saigon were brutally beaten by the police” (“Nhiều nhà hoạt động tại Sài Gòn bị CA đánh đập dã man”), “Dan lam bao” (blog), December 27, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/12/bi-bat-vi-trich-dan-loi-thu-tuong.html> (accessed December 27, 2015).

¹⁸ Dan lam bao, “Saigon: Three rights activists were detained for participating in the Commemoration of the Paracel Islands’ navy battle” (“Sai Gon: Ba nhà hoạt động nhân quyền bị bắt khi đi tham dự Lễ Tưởng niệm Hải chiến Hoàng Sa”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), January 20, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/01/sai-gon-ba-nha-hoat-ong-nhan-quyen-bi.html> (accessed January 21, 2016).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ For a detailed description of his May 1 arrest, see Huynh Thanh Phat’s Facebook post on May 2, 2016, “What happened at the police station?” (“Chuyện tại đồn?”): <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=821372987967031&set=a.372803222824012.1073741827.100002830128087&type=3&theater> (accessed June 6, 2016).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

“enticed” by the outlawed political party Viet Tan. The accusation was published widely in state media. After Phat called a reporter at Tuoi Tre newspaper to protest the publication of his name in the article, Tuoi Tre revised its article and removed Phat’s name.²³

Attacks on Nguyen Trung Ton and Nguyen Viet Tu, February 27, 2017

On February 27, 2017, Nguyen Trung Ton and Nguyen Viet Tu were taking a bus from Quang Thing commune, Thanh Hoa province to Ba Don town, Quang Binh province. Upon arrival, a group of seven or eight young men in civilian clothing dragged them into a van.

According to Nguyen Trung Ton:

The men took our belongings, stripped our clothes off, covered our heads with our jackets and beat us repeatedly with iron tubes. They did not tell us any reason. The van moved and they continued to beat us [in the van]. There was a driver and at least six other men. Three beat me and three beat Nguyen Viet Tu. I did not know which direction the van went, but it stopped at a deserted area. The men dragged us out of the van. I saw that it was by the side of a mountain, next to a cement drainage ditch. They continued to use iron tubes to beat me and used their shoes to crush my toes. They used iron sticks to strike my feet until they bled.²⁴



Nguyen Trung Ton and his feet after being assaulted in Quang Binh on February 27, 2017. © 2017 Private/Brotherhood for Democracy

²³ Anh Ba Sam, “Journalist Vien Su of Tuoi Tre newspaper: Publish news provided by the police, but not responsible for its content” (“Nha bao Vien Su, bao Tuoi Tre: Dua tin cua Cong an, nhung khong chiu trach nhiem noi dung”), post to “Anh Ba Sam” (blog), May 15, 2016, <https://anhbasam.wordpress.com/2016/05/15/8288-nha-bao-vien-su-bao-tuoi-tre-dua-tin-cua-cong-an-nen-khong-chiu-trach-nhiem-noi-dung/> (accessed June 1, 2016). See also N.V., “Ho Chi Minh City Police confirmed that ‘Viet Tan was behind the disturbance’” (“Cong an TP HCM khang dinh ‘Viet Tan to chuc gay roi’”), *Tuoi tre*, May 14, 2016, <http://tuoitre.vn/tin/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/20160514/cong-an-tphcm-khang-dinh-viet-tan-to-chuc-gay-roi/1100962.html> (accessed June 1, 2016).

²⁴ Nguyen Trung Ton’s Facebook page, “Reporting the assault” (“Don trinh bao”), March 3, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/nguyentrung.ton.5/posts/713838685464545> (accessed March 3, 2017).

The men later abandoned Nguyen Trung Ton and Nguyen Viet Tu in a deserted forest in Ha Tinh province.²⁵

Nguyen Trung Ton is a Protestant pastor and a blogger whose writing focuses on the lack of religious freedom in Vietnam and other rights issues. He has written about local land confiscation and corruption that has driven many peasants into landlessness. He has complained about the government wasting tax money on what he considered to be frivolous festivals instead of building infrastructure, schools or helping the poor. He has supported fellow religious activists including Hoa Hao Buddhist leader Le Quang Liem and Mennonite pastor Duong Kim Khai. In addition, Nguyen Trung Ton has written about police harassment and assaults against him and his family. In June 2010, his teenage son Nguyen Trung Trong Nghia was beaten on his way to school by five anonymous men after his father exposed police abuses.



Nguyen Trung Ton's 15-year-old son Nguyen Trung Trong Nghia after being assaulted in Thanh Hoa on June 28, 2010. © 2010 Private/Hung Viet

Nguyen Trung Ton was arrested in January 2011 for “conducting propaganda against the state” under article 88 of the penal code. He was sentenced to two years in prison. After completing his prison term in January 2013, he served two additional years on probation that restricted his movement to his residential commune. He currently serves as the representative for the Brotherhood for Democracy (Hoi Anh em Dan chu), a pro-democracy group whose founding member Nguyen Van Dai was arrested in December 2015.

Attack on Nguyen Thi Thai Lai, February 12, 2017

On February 12, 2017, pro-environment activist Nguyen Thi Thai Lai and a friend were leaving a restaurant in Van Thanh ward, Nha Trang. A group of four men in civilian clothing blocked their way and started beating her. She said:

²⁵ “Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton was ‘assaulted by secret police’” (“MS Nguyen Trung Ton bi ‘mat vu cong an hanh hung’”), Voice of America, March 2, 2017, <http://www.voatiengviet.com/a/muc-su-nguyen-trung-ton-mat-vu-cong-an-hanh-hung-chung-toi/3745817.html> (accessed March 3, 2017). See also “Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton was kidnapped and beaten” (“Muc su Nguyen Trung Ton bi bat coc va danh dap”), Radio Free Asia, February 28, 2017, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/pastor-nguyentrungton-beaten-by-thug-02282017094332.html> (accessed February 28, 2017).



Nguyen Thi Thai Lai after being assaulted in Nha Trang on February 12, 2017. © 2017 Private

Four young men, like four water buffalo, blocked our motorbike. They grabbed me by my neck and threw me on the ground. They beat me until I fainted. They kicked me in the face – look at my [bruised] face. They kicked me in the face. They kicked me and beat me until I fainted.²⁶

Nguyen Thi Thai Lai suffered swollen lips, a severely bruised face, and a bruised arm. She reported the assault to the police headquarters of Van Thanh ward but no arrests were made.²⁷

Nguyen Thi Thai Lai participated in protests against the Taiwanese steel company Formosa for causing an environmental disaster in April 2016. She also protested against China and

²⁶ Nguyen Thi Thai Lai's live video clip on Facebook, February 13, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/100008324985598/videos/1853636721590476/> (accessed February 13, 2017).

²⁷ "The person who spoke up about Formosa was assaulted" ("Nguoi len tieng vu Formosa bi hanh hung"), Radio Free Asia, February 13, 2017, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/formosa-critic-beaten-02132017075819.html> (accessed February 13, 2017).

voiced support for fellow activists including Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (also known as Mother Mushroom), Tran Thi Nga, Can Thi Theu, and Nguyen Dang Minh Man, all of whom have been imprisoned for exercising their rights. Nguyen Thi Thai Lai was interrogated by the police in June 2016 for her alleged posts on Facebook about the late President Ho Chi Minh. In November 2016, she was questioned by the police regarding her connection with blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, who was arrested a month earlier for her blogging activities.

Attack on Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh, December 26, 2016

In the afternoon of December 26, 2016, Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh was sitting in a café in Ho Chi Minh City when a group of men in civilian clothing approached and assaulted him.²⁸ They bent his arms behind his back and struck him in the head, chest, and back. They then covered his head with a jacket, dragged him to a car, and took him to the police headquarters of Tan My ward, district 7, Ho Chi Minh City, where they detained him for several hours.²⁹ Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh was released that night at about 11:30 p.m. While taking a taxi home, a group of men on motorbikes surrounded the taxi and forced it to stop. They dragged Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh out of the taxi and beat him.³⁰ He said:

They dragged me out [of the taxi] and beat me in the middle of the road. They beat me for about five minutes; many beat me at the same time, continuously. I lost consciousness for a couple of minutes.³¹

Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh is a pro-democracy activist who has participated in protests against China and held informal classes to teach young people about civil society, human rights, and citizen rights. His wife, Trinh Kim Tien, is also a rights activist who has

²⁸ An Ton, “A Vietnamese activist was assaulted after America passed Magnitsky law” (“Mot nha hoat dong VN bi hanh hung sau khi My thong qua luat Magnitsky”), Voice of America, December 29, 2016, <http://www.voatiengviet.com/a/mot-nha-hoat-dong-vn-bi-hanh-hung-sau-khi-my-thong-qua-luat-magnitsky/3655590.html> (accessed February 14, 2017).

²⁹ Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh’s Facebook page, “Violence cannot stop us” (Bao luc khong lam ta khuat phuc”), December 28, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/paulothanhnguyen/posts/1358012037576369> (accessed February 14, 2017).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ An Ton, “A Vietnamese activist was assaulted after America passed Magnitsky law,” Voice of America. See also Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh’s Facebook page, “A report and a denunciation” (“Don Trinh bao va To cao”), January 2, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/paulothanhnguyen/posts/1363297287047844?pnref=story> (accessed Feb 14, 2017).

campaigned against police violence. Her father was killed by the police in 2011 due to a traffic violation.³² Both Nguyen Ho Nhat Thanh and Trinh Kim Tien have suffered numerous cases of police harassment and intimidation.

Attack on Nguyen Van Dung, December 23, 2016

On December 23, 2016, Nguyen Van Dung (also known as Dung Aduku) was driving a motorbike in Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hoa province when six men on three motorbikes approached him and knocked his motorbike over.³³ The men wore civilian clothing and surgical masks. They tore his jacket off, covered his head and helmet and dragged him into a van.³⁴ In the van, the men:

Stripped my pants and shoes off and struck me on my shoulders, chest, stomach, and thighs. They used belts to whip my thighs. They turned me face-down, removed my jacket, helmet, and glasses. They covered my head with my wool shirt, pulled my underwear down and hit me on my back, hip, behind and thigh. They used belts to whip me on my hip and behind. Then they turned me over, touched and felt my chest, chose a spot and hit me again and again on that spot, which caused me great pain and difficulty breathing.³⁵



Nguyen Van Dung (also known as Dung Aduku) after being assaulted in Thanh Hoa on December 23, 2016. © 2016 Private/Viet Nam Thoi Bao

³² For more on the death of Trinh Kim Tien's father Trinh Xuan Tung at the hands of police, see Human Rights Watch report *Public Insecurity: Death in Custody and Police Brutality in Vietnam*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2014), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/09/16/public-insecurity/deaths-custody-and-police-brutality-vietnam>.

³³ Han Giang, "Police robbed and brutally assaulted activist Nguyen Van Dung" ("Cong an cuop tai san va hanh hung da man nha hoat dong Nguyen Van Dung"), *Viet Nam Thoi Bao*, December 29, 2016, http://www.ijavn.org/2016/12/vntb-cong-cuop-tai-san-va-hanh-hung-da_29.html (accessed March 3, 2017).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Nguyen Van Dung, "A report on the assault I suffered on December 23, 2016" ("Bao cao vu viec toi bi dan ap ngay 23/12/2016"), Nguyen Van Dung's Facebook page, December 31, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/aduku.uganda/posts/229188490863040> (accessed March 3, 2017).

The men later abandoned Nguyen Van Dung in a small pond with his wool shirt still covering his head.³⁶ Nguyen Van Dung suffered many bruises all over his body. He reported the assault to the nearby police of Hai Binh commune, Tinh Gia district, Thanh Hoa province.

Nguyen Van Dung is a member of Brotherhood for Democracy (Hoi Anh em Dan chu). He has participated in anti-China protests and went to near the courts during the trials of fellow activists to show solidarity.

Attack on Truong Minh Huong, December 22, 2016

On December 22, 2016, Truong Minh Huong went to have lunch with a group of land rights petitioners in the town of Phu Ly, Ha Nam province. When he was taking a taxi with human rights lawyer Ha Huy Son to Hanoi, traffic police stopped the taxi and forced them out.³⁷ Men in civilian clothing punched and kicked Truong Minh Huong in front of lawyer Ha Huy Son and two police officers. According to Ha Huy Son:

Six or seven security agents in civilian clothing rushed in, kicked Huong and punched him in the face. He fell down by the side of the road, witnessed by two traffic police officers who stopped our taxi. I tried to stop them to no avail, and asked the traffic police officers to protect citizens and to stop the men from beating Huong. The traffic police officers ignored me and left.³⁸



Truong Minh Huong after being assaulted in Ha Nam on December 22, 2016. © 2016 Private

³⁶ Ibid. See also Nguyen Nguyen, “Activist Dung Aduku was robbed and assaulted by police thugs” (“Nha hoat dong Dung Aduku bi con an danh dap cuop tai san”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, December 23, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/nha-hoat-dong-dung-aduku-bi-con-an-danh-dap-cuop-tai-san/> (accessed March 3, 2017).

³⁷ Ha Huy Son’s Facebook page, December 22, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/huyson.ha.3/posts/1012667732212251?pnref=story> (accessed February 15, 2017).

³⁸ Ibid.

Truong Minh Huong told a reporter:

The people who lived in the neighborhood told me that one of the men who beat and injured me was a police officer named Long who works at the police branch of Phu Ly, Ha Nam province.³⁹

Truong Minh Huong became a land rights activist in 2007 after his family land was confiscated by the local government for a tourist project. He and his family have faced many examples of intimidation, harassment, and physical assault. In December 2014, three men in civilian clothing stopped him on the street, beat and injured him.⁴⁰ In September 2015, dozens of men in civilian clothing threw rocks into his house and broke his windows.⁴¹

Attack on Nguyen Cong Huan, December 2, 2016

On December 2, 2016, Nguyen Cong Huan (also known as Nguyen Thanh Huan) was taking a bus from Yen Thanh to Vinh in Nghe An province to attend the wedding party of former political prisoner Nguyen Dinh Cuong.⁴² A group of men in civilian clothing dragged him out of the bus to the side of the road and beat him.⁴³ The men kicked his face, head, and body until he was unconscious.⁴⁴ They dragged him into a van, drove to a deserted area, took his

³⁹ Nguyen Nguyen, “Activist Trinh Van Huong was assaulted by the police of Ha Nam” (“Nha hoat dong Trinh Van Huong bi cong an Ha Nam hanh hung”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, December 22, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/nha-hoat-dong-trinh-van-huong-bi-cong-an-ha-nam-hanh-hung/> (accessed Feb 25, 2017).

⁴⁰ Nguyen Tuong Thuy, “Mr. Truong Van Huong was brutally beaten” (“Ong Truong Van Huong bi danh dap da man”), post to “Nguyen Tuong Thuy” (blog), December 11, 2014, <https://nguyentuongthuy2012.wordpress.com/2014/12/11/ong-truong-van-huong-bi-danh-dap-da-man/> (accessed Feb 25, 2017).

⁴¹ Truong Minh Huong’s Facebook page, “Is the government under the pretense of thugs and Mafia” (“Co phai con do, xa hoi den dang doi lot chinh quyen”), October 7, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1675726136002099&id=100006941862550 (accessed Feb 25, 2017). See also Nguyen Tuong Thuy, “Mr. Truong Minh Huong continues to be terrorized” (“Ong Truong Minh Huong tiep tuc bi khung bo”), Radio Free Asia, September 24, 2015, <http://www.rfvietnam.com/node/2811> (accessed Feb 25, 2017).

⁴² Nguyen Nguyen, “Nghe An police thugs assaulted rights activist Nguyen Thanh Huan” (“Con an Nghe An hanh hung nha hoat dong Nguyen Thanh Huan”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, December 2, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/con-an-nghe-an-hanh-hung-nha-hoat-dong-nguyen-thanh-huan/> (accessed Feb 16, 2017).

⁴³ Ibid. See also Le Van Son’s Facebook page, December 2, 2016, “SOS: Nghe An police kidnapped and beat a citizen, causing serious injuries” (“SOS: Cong an Nghe An bat coc va danh dan gay thuong tich nghiem trong”), <https://www.facebook.com/paulusleson.89/posts/377438555937673> (accessed Feb 16, 2017).

⁴⁴ Ibid.



Nguyen Cong Huan after being assaulted in Nghe An on December 2, 2016. © 2016 Private

cell phone and other belongings, and left him by the side of the road.⁴⁵ He suffered many bruises on his face and body. Nguyen Cong Huan told a reporter:

They whipped me repeatedly with their belts. One man kicked me on my face and ribs. They struck my chest and on other parts of my body.⁴⁶

Nguyen Cong Huan is a human rights activist who protested against the Taiwanese steel company Formosa for causing an environmental disaster in April 2016. He has also voiced support for pro-democracy fellow activists and political prisoners.

Attack on Dinh Hong Quyen, December 2, 2016

Dinh Hong Quyen is a human rights activist who protested against the Taiwanese steel company Formosa for causing an environmental disaster in April 2016. Dinh Hong Quyen went to the area outside the People’s Court of Hanoi to show support for land rights activist Can Thi Theu during her appeal trial on November 30, 2016.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also “Another activist was assaulted” (“Them mot nha hoat dong bi hanh hung”), Radio Free Asia, December 2, 2016, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/activist-and-facebooker-attacked-12022016091909.html> (accessed Feb 16, 2017).

⁴⁶ “Nghe An police brutally beat a citizen, robbed his belongings, and stripped his clothes” (“Cong an Nghe An danh dan tan bao, cuop tai san, lot quan ao”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, December 2, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/12/02/cong-an-nghe-an-danh-dan-tan-bao-cuop-tai-san-lot-quan-ao/> (accessed Feb 16, 2017).

⁴⁷ “Vietnam: Drop Charges and Free Land Rights Activist,” Human Rights Watch news release, September 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/17/vietnam-drop-charges-and-free-land-rights-activist>.

Two days later, on December 2, 2016, Dinh Hong Quyen was attacked in Yen Nghia ward (Ha Dong) by a group of men in civilian clothing. He suffered injuries to his nose.⁴⁸

Attacks on To Oanh, July 13, 2016 and April 24, 2015

A retired teacher, To Oanh became a pro-democracy blogger and participant in anti-China and pro-environment protests.⁴⁹ He gave testimony on freedom of the press in Vietnam to the US House of Representatives in April 2014.⁵⁰ Upon returning to Vietnam, he was detained at Noi Bai airport and interrogated for many hours.

On the morning of July 13, 2016, blogger To Oanh and his wife Hoang Thi Nhu Hoa were driving a motorbike when a man in civilian clothing followed them home.⁵¹ When they were about 60km from their house in Bac Giang province, the man cut in front of To Oanh's motorbike, forcing him to turn sharply and crash.⁵² After the crash, the man drove away. According to To Oanh's wife, he suffered "blood clots in his head and broken cheek



Dinh Hong Quyen after being assaulted in Ha Dong on December 2, 2016. © 2016 Private

⁴⁸ See "Hanoi Police Suspected of Beating Activist, Attacking Private Residence of Blogger with Dirty Mess," Defend the Defenders, news release, December 3, 2016, <http://www.vietnamhumanrightsdefenders.net/2016/12/03/hanoi-police-allegedly-beat-activist-attack-private-residence-of-blogger-with-dirty-mess/> (accessed January 21, 2017). See also Vu Hang's Facebook page, December 2, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=231320413966733&id=100012663270142 (accessed Jan 21, 2017).

⁴⁹ Thanh Lan, "Blogger To Oanh was attacked by 'thugs'" ("Blogger To Oanh bi 'con do' tan cong"), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, April 24, 2015, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/blogger-oanh-bi-con-do-tan-cong.html> (accessed April 27, 2015).

⁵⁰ Chan Nhu, "A conversation with blogger Nguyen T. Thuy and freelance journalist To Oanh" ("Bui tro chuyen voi blogger Nguyen T. Thuy va nha bao tu do To Oanh"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 9, 2014, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/interw-to-oanh-tthuy-05092014111422.html (accessed April 27, 2015).

⁵¹ Hoa Ai, "We do not want to become slaves for the Chinese enemy" ("Chung toi khong muon lam no le cho Han tac"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, July 15, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/we-don-t-want-to-be-cn-s-slaves-ha-07152016134246.html (accessed July 15, 2016).

⁵² Ibid. See also Han Giang, "Which man 'in civilian clothing' had brutally attacked civil activist To Oanh?" ("Ke 'mac thuong phuc' nao tan cong da man nha hoat dong dan su To Oanh?"), *Viet Nam Thoi bao*, July 15, 2016, <http://www.ijavn.org/2016/07/vntb-ke-mac-thuong-phuc-nao-tan-cong-da.html> (accessed July 16, 2016).



To Oanh after being assaulted in Bac Giang on July 13, 2016. © 2016 Private

bones” as well as many bruises.⁵³ He was taken to the hospital in Bac Giang province for treatment.⁵⁴ His wife suffered a minor cut.

This was not the first time To Oanh has been attacked. On April 24, 2015, he was driving a motorbike to visit villagers of Xuan Quan commune in Van Giang district, Hung Yen province, when an unknown man crashed a motorbike into him and then drove away. To Oanh was injured on his right elbow and knee.⁵⁵ He had to abort his trip.

Attacks on La Viet Dung, July 10, 2016 and May 7, 2016

On the afternoon of July 10, 2016, La Viet Dung attended a soccer game and then joined a gathering with other members of the No-U Football Club in Hanoi.⁵⁶ On the way home, he was attacked by three or four men in civilian clothing who struck him with a brick and seriously fractured his skull.⁵⁷ La Viet Dung was taken to the hospital for emergency treatment.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid. See also Le Lan’s Facebook page, July 14, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/manhhung.bui.1232/posts/1769416433274686?pnref=story> (accessed July 14, 2016).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Chau Van Thi, “A person who testified before the US Congress about Freedom of press was attacked” (“Nguoi tung tham gia Dieu tran ve Tu do bao chi tai Hoa Ky bi tan cong”), *Dan luan*, April 24, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150424/nguoi-tung-tham-gia-dieu-tran-ve-tu-do-bao-chi-tai-hoa-ky-bi-tan-cong> (accessed April 27, 2015).

⁵⁶ Dao Tien Thi’s Facebook page, “La Viet Dung is loved and respected by his comrades and country fellows” (“La Viet Dung trong tinh yeu thuong, cam phuc cua dong chi, dong bao”), reposted to *Bauxite Vietnam*, July 12, 2016, <http://boxitvn.blogspot.com/2016/07/la-viet-dung-trong-tinh-yeu-thuong-cam.html> (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁵⁷ Ibid. See also “Thugs threw rocks and broke La Viet Dung’s head” (“Con do nem da vo dau ong La Viet Dung”), “Dan lam bao” July 11, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/07/con-o-nem-vo-au-anh-la-viet-dung.html> (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁵⁸ Ibid. See also Nguyen Thien Nhan, “Activist La Viet Dung is barbarously attacked by the police again” (“Nha hoat dong La Viet Dung lai bi cong an tan cong man ro”), *Viet Nam Thoi bao*, July 11, 2016, <http://www.ijavn.org/2016/07/vntb-nha-hoat-ong-la-viet-dung-lai-bi.html> (accessed August 3, 2016).



La Viet Dung after being assaulted in Hanoi on July 10, 2016. © 2016 Private/Dan Lam Bao

La Viet Dung had also been attacked two months earlier. On May 7, 2016, men threw rocks and broke the front window of his car in an attempt to intimidate him and dissuade him from participating in a pro-environment protest the next day.⁵⁹ He was then accused on national television of being a subversive reactionary.⁶⁰ On May 29, 2016, La Viet Dung was briefly detained by the police for staging a silent protest in public demanding that the government publish the results of an investigation into mass fish deaths in central Vietnam, which had caused a major health scare for consumers of fish.⁶¹

Members of the No-U Football Club, established in October 2011 as an informal soccer club, meet weekly to play soccer, discuss politics, support human rights activists, and participate

⁵⁹ La Viet Dung's Facebook page, May 7, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/lavietdung/posts/10154164882512328> (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁶⁰ La Viet Dung's Facebook page, "A thank you note" ("Thu cam on"), May 15, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/lavietdung/posts/10154184444592328> (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁶¹ "Arrested for sit-in pro-environment protest" ("Bi bat vi toa khang bao ve moi trung"), post to "Dan lam bao" (blog), May 29, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/05/bi-bat-vi-toa-khang-bao-ve-moi-truong.html> (accessed August 3, 2016).

in social activities, including anti-China and pro-environment protests.⁶² The club has been placed under close police surveillance and constant harassment. During a party to commemorate the club's fourth anniversary in October 2015 at a restaurant in Hanoi, men in civilian clothing broke in, destroyed tables and chairs, and assaulted participants.⁶³

Attacks on Do Duc Hop, June 25, 2016 and May 8, 2016

On June 25, 2016, rights activist Do Duc Hop and his wife Tran Thi Thuoc drove a motorbike home after attending the wedding of fellow activist Huynh Cong Thuan. A group of men in civilian clothing stopped the couple and assaulted Do Duc Hop. One man used a knife to threaten Do Duc Hop's wife and told her not to call for help.⁶⁴

He suffered bruises on his forehead and in the corner of his right eye.

This was not the first time Do Duc Hop was attacked. On May 8, 2016, he was assaulted outside the police station of Ben Nghe ward,



Do Duc Hop after being attacked in Ho Chi Minh City on May 8, 2016. © 2016 Private



Do Duc Hop after being attacked in Ho Chi Minh City on June 25, 2016. © 2016 Private

⁶² Simon Denyer, "Vietnamese soccer team's goal isn't on the field; it's in politics," *Washington Post*, December 20, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/a-soccer-team-in-vietnam-doubles-as-a-club-for-dissidents/2015/12/19/4bed4fef-4eab-4940-841d-fcecec107440_story.html (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁶³ Luu Van Minh, "Police and thugs attacked No-U's birthday party" ("Cong an va con do tan cong sinh nhat No-U"). Originally posted on Luu Van Minh's Facebook page, reposted by *Danluan*, October 31, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20151030/luu-van-minh-con-do-tan-cong-sinh-nhat-no-u> (accessed August 3, 2016).

⁶⁴ Do Duc Hop's live videos on his Facebook page, June 25, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/tung.do.581/videos/1038091966276869/> (accessed June 25, 2016). See also Dung Mai's Facebook page, June 26, 2016,



Do Duc Hop after being attacked in Ho Chi Minh City on May 8, 2016. © 2016 Private

District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. That morning agents in civilian clothing blocked his house to prevent him from joining a pro-environment protest during which a number of protesters were detained. In the afternoon, Do Duc Hop went to the police station of Ben Nghe ward to show solidarity with detained fellow activists. Upon seeing a protester taken away in a car outside the police station, he took a couple of photos. About six or seven men in civilian clothing rushed to beat him and dragged him into the police station. In a video clip published by Dan Lam Bao, Do Duc Hop said that he “suffered many punches and kicks.”⁶⁵ He said:

They punched and kicked me, on my face and my body; they bent my wrists and hit me directly on my lips. I tried to cover my face but they bent my hands so they could punch me.... Another person kicked me in my ribs.⁶⁶

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=259092104468148&id=100011020819260%20 (accessed June 26, 2016).

⁶⁵ Dan Lam Bao, “Being tortured by the police for bringing medicine to protesters” (“Bi cong an tra tan vi mang thuoc chua thuong cho nguoi bieu tinh”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), May 10, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/05/bi-ca-tra-tan-vi-mang-thuoc-chua-thuong.html> (accessed May 10, 2016).

⁶⁶ Ibid. See also Nhat ky Yeu nuoc’s Facebook page, May 8, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/nhatkyyeuuoc/photos/a.551760078184077.148040.114731331886956/1371179142908829/?type=3&theater> (accessed May 8, 2016).

Do Duc Hop was released later the same evening. He suffered many bruises. On May 1, 2016, men in civilian clothes detained and beat Do Duc Hop, his fellow activist Duong Thi Tan, former political prisoners Huynh Anh Tu and Pham Thanh Nghien, to prevent them from participating in a pro-environment protest.

Attack on Mai Thi Dung, June 22, 2016

On the morning of June 22, 2016, police prevented former political prisoner Mai Thi Dung from attending the anniversary of the founding of Hoa Hao Buddhism at Quang Minh Tu, an independent Hoa Hao Buddhist pagoda in Cho Moi district, An Giang province. According to Mai Thi Dung's husband Vo Van Buu, also a former political prisoner, Mai Thi Dung and their daughter Vo Thi Tuyet Linh left their house in Cho Moi district for Quang Minh Tu pagoda, but dozens of men stopped them on their way and forced them to turn back to their house.⁶⁷

“Four or five persons surrounded and beat my wife. Her lips are swollen. They also used helmets to hit her from behind.”⁶⁸

Mai Thi Dung is a Hoa Hao Buddhist activist who has joined many protests against the repression of religious groups that are not approved by the government. During the crackdown on independent Hoa Hao Buddhist groups in 2005, the government convicted her of disrupting public order under article 245 of the penal code and sentenced her to five years in prison. In 2007, while she was in prison, the People's Court of Vinh Long tried her for involvement in a protest by independent Hoa Hao Buddhist groups in 2001 and sentenced her to an additional six years in prison, again for violating article 245. In April 2015, under international and domestic pressure, she was released. Her husband Vo Van Buu was also arrested in 2005 and sentenced to seven years in prison. He completed his prison term in August 2012. Both husband and wife are under constant police surveillance.

⁶⁷ Gia Minh, “The government again prevented Hoa Hao Buddhist followers to commemorate” (“Tin do Phat giao Hoa Hao lai bi chinh quyen ngan chan to chuc le”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, June 22, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/non-state-hoa-hao-buddhists-beaten-on-anniversary-gm-06222016082134.html (accessed June 22, 2016).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Attacks on Nguyen Van Thanh, June 5, 2016 and August 4, 2015

On the morning of June 5, 2016, Nguyen Van Thanh was in a café outside the Economic University of Da Nang when an unknown young man came and snatched the bag in which he kept printed copies of his political writings.⁶⁹ The assailant punched him in the face. A little while later, a large group of police in uniform, security agents in civilian clothing, and members of the civilian defense force arrived and escorted Nguyen Van Thanh to the police station of My An ward, Da Nang, where he was detained for a couple of hours.⁷⁰ At the police station, he did not receive any medical treatment. Instead, the police interrogated him about the contents of his political writing.⁷¹ After being released, he sought treatment at the Da Nang Hospital for multiple bruises on his face.⁷²



Nguyen Van Thanh after being assaulted in Da Nang on June 5, 2016. © 2016 Private

This was not the first time Nguyen Van Thanh has been attacked. On August 4, 2015, he was driving his motorbike in Khue My ward, Da Nang, when five unknown men attacked

⁶⁹ Nguyen Van Thanh's Facebook page, "Video in the police station" ("Video trong don cong an"), June 5, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/nguyenvanthanhvn12/videos/vb.100003945036031/741199259354902/?type=2&theater> (accessed June 5, 2016). See also a photo of Nguyen Van Thanh at the Da Nang hospital that he posted on his Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=741249742683187&set=a.272507426224090.1073741828.100003945036031&type=3&theater> (accessed June 5, 2016).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Nguyen Van Thanh talked about being beaten when he distributed leaflets of his writing 'A tree with many worms'" ("Nguyen Van Thanh ke chuyen bi danh khi phat to roi bai viet 'Cay lam sau'"), June 6, 2016, video clip, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rq7OczfPwx> (accessed September 19, 2016).

⁷² Ibid.

him. The attackers grabbed his collar and punched and kicked him repeatedly.⁷³ Nguyen Van Thanh reported the attack to the police of Khue My ward.⁷⁴

Nguyen Van Thanh is a chemical engineer who has lived in Da Nang since 2002. In 2010, he began to blog critical commentaries on social and political issues. He also published his writing on independent websites such as *Bauxite Vietnam* and *Dien dan Xa hoi Dan su* (Social Civilian Forum). Nguyen Van Thanh suffers constant harassment and intimidation, including household registration checks at nights, intimidation of his family members in order to convince him to stop his activism, and even pressure on his landlord to evict him. He has been assaulted four other times, on December 10, 12, and 18, 2013, and on February 16, 2014.



Nguyen Van Thanh after being assaulted in Da Nang on August 4, 2015. © 2015 Private/Thanh's Blog

Threats and Attacks on Hoa Hao Buddhists, June 2-3, 2016

On June 2, 2016, Hoa Hao Buddhist followers Nguyen Van Dien and Nguyen Van Tho were on their way home after visiting former religious prisoner Nguyen Van Lia at his house in Cho Moi district, An Giang province, when unknown men stopped and threatened to kill them.⁷⁵

⁷³ An Thien, "Thugs sponsored by police attacked blogger Nguyen Van Thanh the 5th time" ("Cong an bao ke con do tan cong blogger Nguyen Van Thanh lan thu 5"), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, August 7, 2015, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/cong-bao-ke-con-do-tan-cong-blogger-nguyen-van-thanh-lan-thu-5.html> (accessed June 5, 2016).

⁷⁴ Nguyen Van Thanh, "Writing a report to the police of Khue My ward" ("Viet don trinh bao cong an phuong Khue My"), post to "Nguyen Van Thanh" (blog), August 7, 2015, <http://www.thanhblog.org/2015/08/viet-on-trinh-bao-cong-phuong-khue-my.html> (accessed May 22, 2016).

⁷⁵ Paul Minh Nhat, "Members of the Central Committee of the Pure Hoa Hao Buddhist Church were assaulted and intimidated" ("Cac thanh vien Trung uong GHPGHHTT bi hanh hung va de doa"), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, June 3, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoi ngheo.com/blog/2016/06/03/cac-thanh-vien-trung-uong-ghpghtt-bi-hanh-hung-va-de-doa/> (accessed June 4, 2016).

That night and in the early morning of June 3, a different group of unknown men threw rotten shrimp paste into the house of Nguyen Ngoc Tan and rocks into the house of Nguyen Van Hau in Vinh Long province.⁷⁶ Both are independent Hoa Hao Buddhist followers.

Communist antipathy towards the Hoa Hao dates from the first Indochina war (1946-1954) when many members of the Hoa Hao community opposed the communist-led Viet Minh after the spiritual leader of the religion, Huynh Phu So, was assassinated by communist forces.⁷⁷ During the second Indochina war (1954-1975), Hoa Hao zones in the western Mekong delta continued to resist the Viet Cong insurgency.⁷⁸ Hostility between the Hoa Hao community and the Communist Party continued after the end of the war in 1975. In 1999, the Vietnamese government recognized Hoa Hao Buddhism as a religion.⁷⁹ However, many followers refused to join the state-sanctioned Hoa Hao Buddhist Church and are subject to intrusive surveillance and repression.⁸⁰

Attack on Nguyen Phuong, May 19, 2016

On the evening of May 19, 2016, rights activist Nguyen Phuong left his house on motorbike in Chau Duc district in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province for Ho Chi Minh City.⁸¹

According to Nguyen Phuong:

When I left my house, two security agents followed me [on a motorbike]. At the area of Nghia Thanh commune, they drove right next to me. The person in the back used his helmet to hit me. I was able to avoid the blow. I turned back to flee and called my two younger brothers to escort me back to Ba Ria

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Christopher Goscha, *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), p.224.

⁷⁸ Alexander B. Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p.278.

⁷⁹ The Government Committee for Religious Affairs. “*Hoa Hao Buddhism – Activities and Development*” (“*Dao Phat giao Hoa Hao – Hoat dong va phat trien*”), http://btgcp.gov.vn/Plus.aspx/vi/News/38/o/162/o/1071/Dao_Phath_giao_Hoa_Hao_Hoat_dong_va_phat_trien (accessed September 21, 2016).

⁸⁰ “Vietnam: Release Hoa Hao Buddhist Activist,” Human Rights Watch news release, December 12, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/12/12/vietnam-release-hoa-hao-buddhist-activist>.

⁸¹ Dan luan’s Facebook page, “A pro-environment activist accused the police of attacking him” (“Nguoi hoat dong vi moi truong cao buoc bi an ninh tan cong”), May 19, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/danluan.org/photos/a.403967392985945.89162.401392156576802/1012848762097802/?type=3&theater> (accessed May 20, 2016).



Nguyen Phuong after being assaulted on May 19, 2016, in Ba Ria – Vung Tau. © 2016 Private

where we encountered these two thugs again. This time, there were traffic police accompanying them. I was beaten in front of traffic police, witnessed by many bystanders, but the traffic police did nothing to stop them.⁸²

Police then detained Nguyen Phuong and escorted him to the police headquarters of Chau Duc district, Ba Ria-Vung Tau province.⁸³ He was released a few hours later.

Nguyen Phuong is a rights activist who participated in pro-environment protests in Ho Chi

⁸² Ibid. See also Nguyen Phuong's Facebook page, May 19, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=545064775666593&set=a.196901990482875.1073741830.100004892255580&type=3&theater> (accessed May 20, 2016).

⁸³ Ibid. See also a video account narrated by rights activist Nguyen Huu Tinh, posted on Nguyen Phuong's Facebook page, May 20, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/phuong.duy.3386/videos/vb.100004892255580/545335308972873/?type=2&theater> (accessed May 20, 2016).

Minh City in May 2016. He has openly supported political prisoners Tran Huynh Duy Thuc⁸⁴ and Can Thi Theu,⁸⁵ and boycotted the national election in May 2016.⁸⁶

Attacks on Tran Thi Hong, March 30, April 14, and May 13, 2016

On March 30, 2016, Tran Thi Hong planned to attend a meeting with US Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein and other staff from the US Embassy and Consulate to talk about the situation of the “Lutheran church in the highlands” and “the repression of ethnic prisoners of conscience.”⁸⁷ On her way to the hotel where the meeting was to be held, men in civilian clothing stopped her motorbike and asked her to go to the police station. When she refused to comply, the men twisted her arms, grabbed her hair, and dragged her.⁸⁸ They then took away her motorbike and sent her home in a taxi. Upon hearing that Tran Thi Hong had been prevented from attending the meeting, Ambassador Saperstein and other members of the US delegation went to her house to meet her.⁸⁹

On April 14, the authorities summoned Tran Thi Hong to the headquarters of the People’s Committee of Hoa Lu ward in the city of Pleiku, Gia Lai province, to question her about her meeting with the US delegation.⁹⁰ When she refused to go, four persons carried her by her legs and arms and took her to the headquarters by car. They carried her to a room on the third floor where a woman slapped her.⁹¹ According to Ms. Hong, two women dragged her

⁸⁴ See Nguyen Phuong’s Facebook page, May 23, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=546706365502434&set=a.196901990482875.1073741830.100004892255580&type=3&theater> (accessed September 21, 2016).

⁸⁵ See Nguyen Phuong’s Facebook page, September 20, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=603677476471989&set=a.102659029907172.5194.100004892255580&type=3&theater> (accessed September 21, 2016).

⁸⁶ See Nguyen Phuong’s Facebook page, May 21, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=545934468912957&set=a.196901990482875.1073741830.100004892255580&type=3&theater> (accessed September 21, 2016).

⁸⁷ Huyen Trang, “Security agents assaulted Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh’s wife” (“An ninh hanh hung phu nhan Muc su Nguyen Cong Chinh”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/03/31/an-ninh-hanh-hung-phu-nhan-muc-su-nguyen-cong-chinh/> (accessed March 31, 2016). For more information on this incident, see “Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh’s wife was prevented from meeting with an US State Department’s delegation” (“Vo MS Nguyen Cong Chinh bi ngan can gap phai doan cua Bo Ngoai giao Hoa Ky”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, April 1, 2016, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/pastor-nguyencongchinh-wife-harrasted-04012016092351.html> (accessed April 2, 2016).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Mac Lam, “Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh’s wife was assaulted” (“Vo MS Nguyen Cong Chinh bi hanh hung”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, April 14, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/wife-of-dissident-pastor-attacked-after-an-us-delegate-visiting-her-ml-04142016145951.html (accessed April 16, 2016).

⁹¹ Ibid.

by her hair. They trampled on her feet and punched her.⁹² She was detained for a couple of hours and then released.

On May 11, 12, 13 and 14, 2016, authorities repeatedly went to Ms. Hong's house and forced her to go to the headquarters to question her about the March 30 meeting again. She says that on May 13 she was assaulted at Hoa Lu ward police headquarters.⁹³

Her family has long suffered official repression. Her husband, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, was arrested in April 2011 and charged with “undermining national great unity” under article 87 of the penal code. He is currently serving an 11-year prison sentence. He reportedly has suffered numerous rights violations in prison, including being beaten by prison inmates with the knowledge of prison staff.

Attack on Nguyen Van The, May 7, 2016

Father Nguyen Van The of the Dong Chuong parish, Bac Ninh diocese, was on his way from Hop Hoa commune to Son Duong town in Son Duong district, Tuyen Quang province, on May 7, 2016, when he was attacked by four men wearing surgical masks and helmets. Father Nguyen Van Phong told RFA that these men “hit [Father The] on his face, head, arms, legs, and body.”⁹⁴ In an interview on the Vietnamese website *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo* (Good News for the Poor), Father Nguyen Van The told a reporter that the men “beat me repeatedly.”⁹⁵ Father The thought that the cause of the beating might be because he “intervened in the illegal exploitation of sand from Lo river and condemned the authorities of Son Duong district for intentionally seizing the land of the parish.”⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Tran Thi Hong's Facebook page, “A report of being harassed for four consecutive days by the Pleiku police” (“Tuong trinh su viec bi cong an Pleiku sach nhieu 4 ngay lien tiep”), reposted on Father Dinh Huu Thoai's Facebook page on May 15, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/dinh.h.thoai/posts/10204879402905402?pnref=story> (accessed May 15, 2016). See also Gia Minh, “Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh's wife was summoned by the police for meeting with a US delegation” (“Vo cua MS Nguyen Cong Chinh bi cong an moi vi tiep xuc phai doan My”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 12, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/feeble-wife-of-jailed-pastor-interrogated-due-meet-us-delegates-gm-05122016075105.html (accessed May 15, 2016).

⁹⁴ “A Catholic priest was attacked by thugs” (“Mot linh muc bi con do tan cong”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 9, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/catholic-priest-brutally-beaten-by-thugs-05092016083309.html (accessed May 10, 2016).

⁹⁵ Paul Minh Nhat, “Father Giuse Nguyen Van The from Bac Ninh Diocese was assaulted by thugs” (“Cha Giuse Nguyen Van The Giao phan Bac Ninh bi con do hanh hung”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, May 10, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoinheo.com/blog/2016/05/10/cha-giuse-nguyen-van-the-giao-phan-bac-ninh-bi-con-do-hanh-hung/> (accessed June 3, 2016).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Father Nguyen Van The was badly injured in the attack and was taken to Hung Vuong hospital in Phu Tho province for treatment. He had many cuts and bruises on his arms, hands, and right knee. The incident was reported to the local police.

Attack on Nguyen Ngoc Tan and Nguyen Thi Lien, April 22, 2016

Independent Hoa Hao Buddhist followers Nguyen Ngoc Tan and Nguyen Thi Lien were on the way home after attending a prayer session at the home of fellow Hoa Hao Buddhist activist Le Van Soc in Binh Minh, Vinh Long province, on April 22, 2016, when they were attacked by men in civilian clothing. Le Van Soc told RFA Vietnamese that the men separated Nguyen Ngoc Tan and Nguyen Thi Lien from a group of six people and attacked them.⁹⁷

“They kicked the motorbike. When it fell, four people jumped in to beat her [Nguyen Thi Lien] and Nguyen Ngoc Tan. Two men kicked her.”⁹⁸

Nguyen Ngoc Tan suffered many bruises and Nguyen Thi Lien was taken to the hospital for emergency treatment.⁹⁹ On June 3, 2016, unknown men threw rotten shrimp paste into Nguyen Ngoc Tan’s house in Binh Minh, Vinh Long province.

Attack on Nguyen Dinh Cuong, April 14, 2016

Former political prisoner Nguyen Dinh Cuong was on his way home on April 14, 2016, from a wedding engagement ceremony when he was stopped by the police and taken to the police headquarters of Dien Dong commune, Dien Chau district, Nghe An province. He told a freelance reporter with *Thanh nien Cong giao* (Catholic Youth) that at the police station:

Several police in civilian clothing beat and punched me repeatedly on my neck, head, and body. They even used a mug to strike my head.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ “Hoa Hao Buddhist followers were attacked” (“Tin do Phat giao Hoa Hao bi tan cong”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, April 22, 2016, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/hoahao-followers-attack-b-plainclothes-policemen-04222016150028.html> (accessed June 5, 2016).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Thien Vinh, “The police threatened to “eliminate” former prisoner of conscience Nguyen Dinh Cuong: I do not give a damn about the law” (“Cong an doa ‘tieu diet’ cuu TNLT Nguyen Dinh Cuong: Tao dech can luat”), *Thanh nien Cong giao*, April 14, 2016, <http://thanhnienconggiao.blogspot.com/2016/04/cong-doa-tieu-diet-cuu-tnlt-nguyen-inh.html> (accessed May 4, 2016).

He claimed that the police also tore off the “No China” t-shirt he was wearing.

Nguyen Dinh Cuong had previously been arrested in December 2011 for allegedly “carrying out activities that aim at overthrowing the people’s administration” and sentenced to four years in prison. He is currently serving four years’ probation, which restricts his movement within his residential commune.

Attack on Truong Van Dung, Trung Nghia, Tu Anh Tu, and Can Thi Theu, April 8, 2016

On April 8, 2016, several dozen rights activists gathered at a café near the US Embassy in Hanoi to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the pro-democracy Bloc 8406. The participants decided to march to demand the release of prominent lawyer Nguyen Van Dai and fellow activist Le Thu Ha who were arrested in December 2015 and charged with conducting propaganda against the state. The police dispersed the march and detained seven activists.

A witness named Mai Phuong Thao (also known as Thao Teresa) reported that she saw many men in civilian clothing hit activist Truong Van Dung. The men also grabbed activist Trung Nghia by the neck, choking him, then dragged him into a bus used by the police to transport detainees and took him to a police station. Land rights activist Can Thi Theu reported that men in civilian clothing slammed the back of her neck against the side of the bus.¹⁰¹ Rights activist Tu Anh Tu described the incident to a freelance reporter:



Tu Anh Tu after being assaulted in Hanoi on April 8, 2016. © 2016 Private/Tin Mung Cho Nguoi Ngheo

¹⁰¹ “On the 10th anniversary of Bloc 8406, at least 7 people were beaten and detained” (“Ky niem 10 nam khoi 8406, it nhat 7 nguoi bi bat bo & danh dap”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, April 9, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/phong-su-tu-viet-nam/ky-niem-10-nam-khoi-8406-it-nhat-7-nguoi-bi-bat-bo-danh-dap.html> (accessed June 16, 2016). See also “Gathering to support lawyer Nguyen Van Dai, many people were detained” (“Tap trung ung ho LS Nguyen Van Dai, nhieu nguoi bi bat

Today is the 10th anniversary of Bloc 8406. A number of us decided to meet at a café [to celebrate] and also called for the freedom of Nguyen Van Dai. We sat for about 30 minutes until the police asked the café owner to close its door and began to arrest people. I saw the police arrest my friend Thai Van Dung. I rushed over to hold onto my friend to no avail. The police teamed up to beat me. They dragged me to the ground and kicked me in the face. I am suffering a severe headache.¹⁰²

Attacks on Hoa Hao Buddhist followers, April 2, 2016

Many independent Hoa Hao Buddhist followers were assaulted on April 2, 2016, when they went to Quang Minh Pagoda in Long Hoa 2 hamlet, Long Dien A commune, Cho Moi district in An Giang province to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Hoa Hao Buddhist founder Huynh Phu So. Nguyen Van Lia, a former political prisoner sentenced for his religious beliefs, was stopped on the way and punched in the face by men in civilian clothing.¹⁰³ A group of 14 Hoa Hao Buddhist activists including Dinh Thi Hong Trang and Cao Van Hung went to help Nguyen Van Lia and were attacked by a group of about 40 people in civilian clothing.¹⁰⁴

giu”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, April 8, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/activists-detained-while-protesting-in-front-of-us-embassy-04082016094800.html (accessed June 16, 2016).

¹⁰² Huyen Trang, “Hot news: Many citizens were beaten and detained by the police during the 10th anniversary of Bloc 8406” (“Tin nong: Nhieuc cong dan bi cong an danh dap, bi bat trong ngay ky niem 10 nam thanh lap Khoi 8406”), *Tin mung cho nguai ngheo*, April 8, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/04/08/tin-nong-nhieuc-cong-dan-bi-cong-an-danh-dap-bi-bat-trong-ngay-ky-niem-10-nam-thanh-lap-khoi-8406/> (accessed April 9, 2016).

¹⁰³ Tam Nhu, “The government suppressed Hoa Hao Buddhist followers participating in the commemoration of the day our virtuous founder was killed” (“Chinh quyen dan ap tin do PGHH tham du le tuong niem ngay Duc Huynh Giao Chu tho nan”), post to “Truyen thong Phat giao Hoa Hao” (blog), April 3, 2016, <http://truyenthongphatgiaohao.blogspot.com/2016/04/chinh-quyen-ap-tin-o-pghh-tham-du-le.html#more> (accessed June 4, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. See also “The police cracked down on the 69th commemoration of the day the Hoa Hao Buddhist founder Huynh Phu So was murdered” (“CA xua quan dan ap le tuong niem 69 nam ngay Duc Huynh Giao chu bi sat hai”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), April 3, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/04/ca-xua-quan-ap-le-tuong-niem-69-nam.html> (accessed April 6, 2016). On April 2, in order to prevent independent Hoa Hao Buddhist followers from gathering and commemorating the anniversary of the death of the founder of Hoa Hao Buddhism, Huynh Phu So, police and security agents prevented people from going into or out of Quang Minh pagoda in Cho Moi district, An Giang province. According to former political prisoner Vo Van Thanh Liem who presided at the pagoda, security agents repeatedly beat him and other Hoa Hao Buddhist followers with sticks. As a form of extreme protest against government repression, Vo Thi Thu Ba used a knife to cut her neck. Ibid. See also Nguyen Bac Truyen’s Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/bactruyen.nguyen/posts/1993038827588634> (accessed May 5, 2016).



Tran Minh Nhat after being assaulted in Lam Dong on February 22, 2016. © 2016 Private/Dan Lam Bao

Attack on Tran Minh Nhat, February 22, 2016

Former political prisoner Tran Minh Nhat and his family were attacked on the evening of February 22, 2016 by a group of men in civilian clothing who had gathered outside his house and were cursing at them. When Tran Minh Nhat opened the door to see who was outside, a man threw a rock at him, striking him in the head and fracturing his skull.¹⁰⁵ When his family tried to take him to the hospital, the men blocked their way and threatened to beat them. Nhat's family took him to his brother's house instead.

This was not the first time Tran Minh Nhat had been assaulted. On November 8, 2015, he took a bus home to Lam Dong province after a visit to Ho Chi Minh City where he had gone for a medical checkup and to meet with officials at the US Consulate. Security agents

¹⁰⁵ Dan lam bao, "The police threw a rock and fractured Tran Minh Nhat's head" ("Cong an nem da vo dau anh Tran Minh Nhat"), post to "Dan lam bao" (blog), February 23, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/02/con-gia-tang-khung-bo-gia-inh-cuu-tnlt.html> (accessed February 23, 2016).

stopped the bus at Dinh Van town (Lam Ha district, Lam Dong province) and arrested him. One man grabbed him by the hair and removed the crucifix he was wearing around his neck. The others grabbed his legs and arms and dragged him off the bus. When Nhat screamed for help, security agents slapped, gagged, choked, and kicked him into submission and forced him to the police station in Dinh Van town.¹⁰⁶ The police accused him of violating the terms of his probation by going to Ho Chi Minh City.¹⁰⁷



Tran Minh Nhat after being assaulted in Lam Dong on November 8, 2015. © 2015 Private/Defend the Defenders

Tran Minh Nhat said he was beaten again during his detention: “Major Le Van Huong slapped my head, pinched my ear, and pressed my head down.”¹⁰⁸ He also said that officers named Minh and Long choked him, bending his left hand and punching him in the stomach.¹⁰⁹ He filed a complaint with Lam Dong province police, but to no avail. Nine days later when Tran Minh Nhat and his father went to a clinic in Lam Ha district the police detained him again for violating probation. During the arrest, officer Minh choked Nhat and forcefully pressed him against a tree.¹¹⁰ On April 16, 2016, security agents broke into Nhat’s garden and assaulted him and his brothers.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Tran Minh Nhat, “The police of Lam Ha district choked, beat and insulted former prisoner of conscience Tran Minh Nhat” (“Cong an Lam Ha bop co, danh, si va cuu TNLT Tran Minh Nhat”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, November 10, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/11/10/cong-an-lam-ha-bop-co-danh-si-va-cuu-tnlt-tran-minh-nhat/> (accessed November 10, 2015). See also Chu Manh Son, “Police of Lam Ha district behaved like thugs against patriots” (“Cong an huyen Lam Ha hanh xu kieu con do doi voi nguoi yeu nuoc”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, November 10, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/11/10/cong-an-huyen-lam-ha-hanh-xu-kieu-con-do-doi-voi-nguoi-yeu-nuoc/> (accessed November 10, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Gia Minh, “The police policy of intimidating, harassing and beating still exists” (“Chinh sach ham doa, sach nhieu danh dap cua cong an con ton tai den bao gio”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, November 9, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/tor-threat-harras-use-agn-activ-11092015051410.html (accessed November 9, 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Paul Tran Minh Nhat, “The police of Lam Ha district choked, beat and insulted former prisoner of conscience Tran Minh Nhat” (“Cong an Lam Ha bop co, danh, si va cuu TNLT Tran Minh Nhat”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Tran Minh Nhat, “A report of abuse inflicted by the police of Dinh Van town, Lam Ha district” (“Tuong trinh nhung bao hanh cua cong an thi xa Dinh Van, huyen Lam Ha”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, November 20, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/11/20/tnlt-tran-minh-nhat-tuong-trinh-nhung-bao-hanh-cua-cong-an-thi-xa-dinh-van-huyen-lam-ha/> (accessed April 5, 2016).

Tran Minh Nhat had initially been arrested in August 2011 for his alleged affiliation with the banned overseas political party Viet Tan. He was charged with “carrying out activities that aim to overthrow the people’s administration” under article 79 of the penal code, ended up spending four years in prison and was sentenced to three additional years of probation after he was released in August 2015. Since his release, his family has suffered numerous instances of harassment and intimidation. Anonymous thugs have thrown rocks into their house, poisoned their chickens, sprayed chemicals and killed their pepper and tea trees, and destroyed their coffee and avocado garden. Tran Minh Nhat and his family have reported this to the local authorities to no avail.¹¹¹

On April 7, 2016, Tran Minh Nhat said that a foreign diplomat canceled a meeting with him in Da Lat, Lam Dong province, reportedly owing to a safety warning from the Vietnamese government.¹¹² According to Tran Minh Nhat, on the day the visit was scheduled security agents guarded all routes and prevented Nhat from leaving his house. A large pile of gravel was dumped on the road outside Nhat’s house to prevent visitors from getting to the house.¹¹³

Attack on Tran Thi Nga, February 21, 2016

In May 2014, activist Tran Thi Nga (also known as Tran Thuy Nga) was assaulted by a group of five men who used iron rods to beat her. She was taken to the hospital later and reported to have a broken arm and broken knee.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Tran Minh Nhat, “An emergency call for help regarding Tran Minh Nhat’s family being harassed and harmed” (“Thu keu cuu ve viec gia dinh Tran Minh Nhat bi sach nhieu va pha hoai”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), February 17, 2016, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2016/02/thu-keu-cuu-ve-viec-gia-inh-tran-minh.html> (accessed May 6, 2016).

¹¹² An Thien, “The police prevented members of the US Consulate from visiting former prisoner of conscience Tran Minh Nhat” (“Cong an ngan chan Toa lanh su Hoa Ky den tham cuu TNLT Tran Minh Nhat”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, April 6, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/cong-ngan-chan-toa-lanh-su-hoa-ky-den-tham-cuu-tnlt-tran-minh-nhat.html> (accessed June 7, 2016).

¹¹³ Ibid. See also “The US Consulate cancelled a meeting with Minh Nhat’s family due to fear about security” (“Toa Tong Lanh su quan My huy bo cuoc gap gia dinh Minh Nhat vi lo ngai an toan”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, April 7, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoi ngheo.com/blog/2016/04/07/toa-tong-lanh-su-quan-my-huy-bo-cuoc-gap-gia-dinh-minh-nhat-vi-lo-ngai-an-toan/> (accessed April 16, 2016).

¹¹⁴ “Thugs beat Tran Thi Nga and broke her arm and leg” (“Chi Tran Thi Nga bi con do danh vo xuong tay va chan”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 25, 2014, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/activi-inju-by-thugs-05252014105452.html> (accessed July 5, 2016). See also Ngoc Nhi Nguyen et al., “Police disguised as thugs attacked Tran Thi Nga and broke her arm and leg” (“Chi Tran Thi Nga bi con an gia dang con do truy sat, danh vo xuong tay va chan”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), May 26, 2014, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2014/05/chi-tran-thi-nga-bi-con-o-truy-sat-anh.html> (accessed July 5, 2016).

Thugs engaged in a milder form of assault on February 21, 2016, when they threw rotten shrimp paste at Tran Thi Nga and her sons, five-year-old Phu and three-year-old Tai, as the three were heading home from a supermarket in the city of Phu Ly, Ha Nam province.¹¹⁵ Tran Thi Nga suffered an eye injury from the shrimp paste; Phu had an allergic reaction.¹¹⁶

Tran Thi Nga is a longtime labor rights activist. In 2003, she went to Taiwan to work. In 2005, she was injured in a traffic accident and did not receive any help from the Vietnamese government or her company. From 2005 to 2008, as she was pursuing medical treatment and a legal claim related to the accident, she received help from an NGO in Taiwan and learned about labor law and workers' rights. In 2008, Tran Thi Nga went back to Vietnam and became active in helping workers who suffered similar mistreatment. She participated in anti-China and pro-environment protests, went to trials of bloggers and rights activists, and visited the houses of political prisoners to show solidarity. She also served as an executive board member for the Vietnamese Women for Human Rights, founded in November 2013.

Tran Thi Nga has suffered repeated intimidation, harassment, detention, interrogation, and physical assault because of her activism.¹¹⁷ In March 2015, she was detained in Hanoi by men in civilian clothing who she believed were security agents and taken back to her hometown in Ha Nam province. During the trip, one man twisted her neck and gagged so

¹¹⁵ "Rights activist Tran Thi Nga continues to be harassed by the police" ("Nha hoat dong Tran Thi Nga tiep tuc bi CA sach nhieu"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, February 23, 2016, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/activist-continually-harassed-02232016105753.html> (accessed July 5, 2016).

¹¹⁶ Ibid. See also An Thien, "Police thugs threw shrimp paste at pro-democracy activist Tran Thi Nga and her sons" ("Me con nha hoat dong dan chu Tran Thi Nga bi con an nem mam tom vao nguoi"), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, February 21, 2016, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/me-con-nha-hoat-dong-dan-chu-tran-thi-nga-bi-con-nem-mam-tom-vao-nguoi.html> (accessed July 5, 2016). This was not the first time thugs threw shrimp paste at Tran Thi Nga and her sons. Late in the evening of December 25, 2015, Tran Thi Nga and Phu were on the way home when thugs threw shrimp paste at them, resulting in a bad rash for Phu. "Human rights activist Tran Thi Nga faces constant harassment" ("Nguoi dau tranh nhan quyen Tran Thi Nga lien tuc bi sach nhieu"), *Dan luan*, January 24, 2016, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20160124/nguoi-dau-tranh-nhan-quyen-tran-thi-nga-lien-tuc-bi-sach-nhieu> (accessed July 5, 2016).

¹¹⁷ For a detailed report of police abuse that Tran Thi Nga has been subjected to since 2010, see Tran Thi Nga's 95-page record of incidents, supported by photos, printed documents, and video clips, "A personal record of Tran Thi Nga" ("Ho so ca nhan Tran Thi Nga"). Originally posted to Tran Thi Nga's blog on November 16, 2015, updated on June 6, 2016, <http://mephu.blogspot.com/2015/11/ho-so-ca-nhan-tran-thi-nga.html> (accessed July 5, 2016). See also "Tran Thi Nga and her sons' lives are under threat" ("Tinh mang hai me con ba Tran Thi Nga bi de doa"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, March 25, 2012, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/ha-nam-police-harassed-tran-thi-nga-mlam-03252012161400.html (accessed July 5, 2016).



Tran Thi Nga after being assaulted in Hanoi on May 25, 2014. © 2014 Private/Dan Lam Bao

she could not call for help. Two other men restrained her hands and legs while the fourth man slapped and punched her.¹¹⁸

In January 2017, the police of Ha Nam province arrested Tran Thi Nga and charged her with conducting propaganda against the state under article 88 of the penal code.

Attack on Father Dang Huu Nam, December 31, 2015

In the evening of December 31, 2015, Father Dang Huu Nam of Phu Yen Parish (Vinh diocese) was attacked by men outside the headquarters of the People's Committee of An Hoa commune, Quynh Luu district, Nghe An province. Father Nam later told a reporter at the Saigon Broadcasting Television Network that:

¹¹⁸ "Tran Thi Nga was kidnapped; Vietnamese communist madly terrorized people during the 132nd IPU conference" ("Chi Tran Thi Nga bi bat coc, CSVN dien cuong khung bo tai hoi nghi IPU 132"), post to "Dan lam bao" (blog), March 30, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/03/chi-tran-thi-nga-bi-bat-coc-csvn-gia.html> (accessed July 5, 2016).

A thuggish group of about 10 people stopped my car. They jumped in, kicked me down onto the road and continued to beat me. Then they kicked me into a channel by the side of the road. This incident was witnessed by the police of An Hoa commune. The police did not intervene. They simply watched the thugs assaulting and beating me.¹¹⁹

Upon learning of the attack, Catholics from the area immediately came to the scene to help Father Nam. They were able to apprehend one of the men, who was taken away by the police of Quynh Luu district.¹²⁰ Father Nam suspected that the attack was revenge for a sermon he performed at Xuan Kieu parish in October 2015 in which he advised Catholic attendants not to believe communists.¹²¹

In a rare example of accountability for such attacks, on January 19, 2016, the police of Quynh Luu district informed Father Dang Huu Nam that they had initiated a case of “disrupting public order” against three of the men involved in the incident and a case against chief of police Ho Ngoc Trung and deputy chief of police Pham Ngoc Huu for “failing to carry out responsibilities resulting in serious consequences.”¹²² Both Ho Ngoc Trung and Pham Ngoc Huu were suspended from work.

Later, the leaders of Nghe An province and Quynh Luu districts, as well as two perpetrators, went to Phu Yen Parish to apologize. Father Dang Huu Nam agreed to forgive the men, withdrew his complaints, and asked that they not be prosecuted. The two police officers involved were later transferred to police forces in other communes.

¹¹⁹ An Thien, “Priest Anton Dang Huu Nam was assaulted by thugs in Nghe An” (“Linh muc Anton Dang Huu Nam bi con do hanh hung o Nghe An”), Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, January 1, 2016, <http://www.sbntn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/linh-muc-anton-dang-huu-nam-bi-con-do-hanh-hung-tai-nghe.html> (accessed April 5, 2016).

¹²⁰ Ibid. See also Minh Nhat, “The police of Nghe An province sponsored thugs to assault priest An-Ton Dang Huu Nam to revenge?” (“Cong an Nghe An bao ke con do hanh hung linh muc An-Ton Dang Huu Nam de tra thu?”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, January 1, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/01/01/cong-an-nghe-an-bao-ke-con-do-hanh-hung-linh-muc-an-ton-dang-huu-nam-de-tra-thu/> (accessed April 5, 2016).

¹²¹ Ibid. See also a video clip of Father Dang Huu Nam preaching at Xuan Kieu parish, posted by “Dan lam bao” on November 1, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1S96X-DK9E> (viewed April 5, 2016).

¹²² Thai Van Dung, “The police of Quynh Luu district rejected the incident of Father Anton Dang Huu Nam assaulted by thugs” (“Cong an huyen Quynh Luu choi bo vu viec con do hanh hung cha Anton Dang Huu Nam”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, January 21, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/01/21/cong-an-huyen-quynh-luu-choi-bo-vu-viec-con-do-hanh-hung-cha-anton-dang-huu-nam/> (accessed April 5, 2016). See also Minh Nhat, “The police of Quynh Luu district ‘shifts the blame,’ the people protested” (“Cong an Quynh Luu ‘gap lua bo tay nguoi,’ dan phan doi”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, January 21, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2016/01/21/cong-an-quynh-luu-gap-lua-bo-tay-nguoi-dan-phan-doi/> (accessed April 5, 2016).



Nguyen Van Dai after being assaulted in Nghe An on December 6, 2015. © 2015 Private/Tin Mung Cho
Nguoi Ngheo

Attacks on Nguyen Van Dai, Ly Quang Son, Vu Van Minh (also known as Vu Duc Minh), and Le Manh Thang, December 6, 2015

Prominent rights campaigner Nguyen Van Dai and three other activists were brutally attacked on the morning of December 6, 2015. To celebrate International Human Rights Day, Nguyen Van Dai gave a talk about human rights enshrined in Vietnam's Constitution, followed by an open discussion, at the Van Loc parish in Nam Dan district, Nghe An province. In the afternoon, Nguyen Van Dai left for Hanoi, accompanied by fellow activists Ly Quang Son, Vu Van Minh (also known as Vu Duc Minh), and Le Manh Thang. Their taxi was stopped by a group of about a dozen men in civilian clothing wearing surgical masks. Nguyen Van Dai told a reporter at RFA that the men dragged him out of the taxi, beating

him with wooden sticks on his thighs and shoulders, and then dragged him into their car.¹²³ The beating continued inside the car:

They slapped me on my face continuously, and struck my ears and mouth. Once the car arrived at Cua Lo beach, they stripped me of my jacket and shoes, pushed me out onto the beach and left.¹²⁴

The three other activists were also severely beaten. According to Ly Quang Son:

The thugs dragged Vu Van Minh out [of the car] and hit him repeatedly in the legs with a stick....¹²⁵ They also dragged Thang (next to the left door) out of the car, hitting him in the chest with a stick. Minh tried to hold on to Thang and I tried to grab their stick. Then another thug whipped my hand and I had to release the stick. I used my feet to kick them about face and head, but they struck me on my ankles, shins, and my calves. Minh was unable to hold on to Thang.¹²⁶

Ly Quang Son reported that the men took Le Manh Thang away in a car to an unknown location, took his cell phone and wallet, and abandoned him by the side of the road.

During the trip, the men punched Thang in the face and body.¹²⁷ According to Nguyen Van Dai and Ly Quang Son, the taxi driver was also beaten by the men.

¹²³ Chan Nhu, "Being beaten by security agents after a discussion of Human rights" ("Bi an ninh vay danh sau cuoc thao luan ve Nhan quyen"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, December 6, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/human-rights-activists-attacked-in-vinh-12062015234336.html (accessed December 9, 2015).

¹²⁴ "Nghe An: the police brutally beat lawyer Nguyen Van Dai" ("Nghe An: CA danh dap da man luat su Nguyen Van Dai"), post to "Dan lam bao" (blog), December 6, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/12/nghe-ca-anh-ap-da-man-luat-su-nguyen.html> (accessed December 6, 2015).

¹²⁵ Chan Nhu, "Being beaten by security agents after a discussion of Human rights" ("Bi an ninh vay danh sau cuoc thao luan ve Nhan quyen"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese.

¹²⁶ Ly Quang Son, "An account of 'the collision with thugs from the homeland of Uncle Ho'" ("Tuong thuat vu 'va cham voi giang ho que Bac'"), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, December 8, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/12/08/ly-quang-son-tuong-thuat-vu-va-cham-voi-giang-ho-que-bac/> (accessed December 8, 2015).

¹²⁷ Ly Quang Son, "How was Le Manh Thang beaten in Nghe An" ("Le Manh Thang bi danh ra sao o Nghe An"), *Vietnam Human Rights Defenders*, December 10, 2015, <http://www.vietnamhumanrightsdefenders.net/2015/12/10/le-manh-thang-bi-danh-ra-sao-tai-nghe-an/> (accessed December 10, 2015).

On December 16, 2015, the police arrested Nguyen Van Dai and fellow activist Le Thu Ha and charged them with “conducting propaganda against the state” under article 88 of the penal code. By early May 2017, he remained in police detention pending investigation.

The December 6th incident was not the first time Nguyen Van Dai had been attacked in this way. In May 2014, while in a café in Hanoi along with several rights activists, a group of men appeared, threw a glass at him, and beat him.¹²⁸ In January and March 2015, groups of men attacked his house and tried to break down the door.¹²⁹

Nguyen Van Dai, 47, was a human rights lawyer who supported the formation of many rights groups, including the Vietnam Independent Union and the pro-democracy Bloc 8406. He was arrested in March 2007 and sentenced to five years’ imprisonment. In November 2007, an appeals court reduced his sentence to four years.¹³⁰

In April 2013, Nguyen Van Dai helped found Brotherhood for Democracy “to defend human



Ly Quang Son’s foot after being assaulted in Nghe An on December 6, 2015. © 2015 Private



Nguyen Van Dai after being assaulted in Hanoi on May 8, 2014. © 2014 Private

¹²⁸ “Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai was assaulted” (“Luât su Nguyen Van Dai bi hanh hung”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 8, 2014, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/lawyer-nguyenvandai-attacked-05082014152111.html> (accessed May 8, 2014).

¹²⁹ Nguyen Van Dai’s Facebook post, “‘Thugs’ attacked my private residence” (“‘Con do’ tan cong nha rieng cua toi”), <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=329543640586877&set=a.123882327819677.1073741828.100005937302699&type=1&theater> (accessed December 8, 2015). See also Nguyen Tuong Thuy, “Lawyer Nguyen Van Dai suffers continuous harassment and terrorization” (“Luât su Nguyen Van Dai lien tuc bi khung bo, sach nhieu”), post to Radio Free Asia Vietnamese (blog), March 7, 2015, <http://www.rfvietnam.com/node/2486> (accessed December 8, 2015).

¹³⁰ “Vietnam: Democracy Activists Should Be Released,” Human Rights Watch news release, November 28, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/11/28/vietnam-democracy-activists-should-be-released>

rights recognized by the Vietnam Constitution and international conventions” and “to promote the building of a democratic, progressive, civilized and just society for Vietnam.”

Nguyen Van Dai was awarded a Hellman Hammett grant in 2007.¹³¹

Attack on Nguyen Nang Tinh, November 24, 2015

Eight men in civilian clothing attacked Catholic activist Nguyen Nang Tinh on November 24, 2015, at Ben Thuy bridge, which connects Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces.

The men stole Tinh’s cell phone and wallet and beat him.¹³²

This was not the first time Nguyen Nang Tinh had been assaulted. In May 2014, he was stopped by a member of the civilian defense force in the city of Vinh, Nghe An province. A group of men in civilian clothing then surrounded and beat him in front of many uniformed police officers who did not intervene.¹³³ The men hit him in the face and bloodied his mouth. Nguyen Nang Tinh reported the beating to the police.¹³⁴



Nguyen Nang Tinh after being assaulted in Nghe An on November 24, 2015.

© 2015 Private

¹³¹ The Hellman/Hammett grants were administered by Human Rights Watch and given to writers around the world who were targets of political persecution. The grant program began in 1989, when the American playwright Lillian Hellman stipulated in her will that her estate should be used to assist writers in financial need as a result of expressing their views; “Vietnam: Dissidents Struggle to Exercise Free Speech,” Human Rights Watch news release, February 6, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/02/06/vietnam-dissidents-struggle-exercise-free-speech>

¹³² Dau Van Duong’s Facebook page, “SOS: Violence increases in Vietnam” (“SOS Bao luc gia tang tai Viet Nam”), https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=507264909442142&id=100004759125130 (accessed November 25, 2015).

¹³³ T. Lan, “A lecturer from an art school in Nghe An province was set up and beaten by the police” (“Thay giao truong nghe thuat Nghe An bi cong an dan canh danh”), *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network*, June 6, 2014. Originally published on Truyen thong Chua Cuu, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-vi%E1%BB%87t-nam/th%E1%BA%A7y-gi%C3%A1o-tr%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Dng-ngh%E1%BB%87-thu%E1%BA%ADt-ngh%E1%BB%87-b%E1%BB%8B-c%C3%B4ng-d%C3%A0n-c%E1%BA%A3nh-%C4%91%C3%A1nh.html> (accessed November 24, 2015).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Attack on Trinh Anh Tuan, October 30, 2015

Blogger Trinh Anh Tuan (also known as Gio Lang Thang) was assaulted on the afternoon of October 30, 2015, when approximately 10 men in civilian clothing blocked his house and prevented him from leaving. When he tried to leave, a man who he believed was a member of the civilian defense force cursed him and scratched his face and neck.¹³⁵

According to blogger Pham Doan Trang, among the men who witnessed the beating was a local ward police officer named Huy.¹³⁶



Trinh Anh Tuan after being assaulted in Hanoi on April 22, 2015. © 2015 Private

This was not the first time Trinh Anh Tuan had been attacked. On the morning of April 22, 2015, three unknown men knocked him off his motorbike and beat him near his house in Long Bien district, Hanoi.¹³⁷ He told a reporter at RFA, “Being beaten, I tried to run away, but they chased after me and continued to beat me. They knocked me down, took a brick, struck me on my head, and bloodied it.”¹³⁸ He reported the attack to the police of Long Bien district. Less than four months later, the police informed him that they had temporarily ceased investigation” because they “could not pin down the perpetrator.”¹³⁹

Trinh Anh Tuan was also attacked in March 2014 after attending a discussion on the right to freedom of movement organized by the Network of Vietnamese Bloggers at a café in

¹³⁵ An Thien, “The police attacked Blogger Trinh Anh Tuan and many pro-democracy activists” (“Cong an tan cong Blogger Trinh Anh Tuan va nhieu nha dau tranh dan chu”), *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network*, October 30, 2015, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/cong-tan-cong-blogger-trinh-anh-tuan-va-nhieu-nha-dau-tranh-dan-chu.html> (accessed November 25, 2015).

¹³⁶ Pham Doan Trang, “Police and thugs, again, in the name of ‘the people,’ beat blogger Gio Lang Thang” (“Cong an va con do lai nhan danh ‘quan chung’ danh blogger Gio Lang Thang”), post to “Blog Doan Trang” (blog), October 31, 2015, <http://www.phamdoantrang.com/2015/10/cong-va-con-o-lai-nhan-danh-quan-chung.html> (accessed November 25, 2015).

¹³⁷ “Thugs assaulted blogger Trinh Anh Tuan and injured his head” (“Blogger Trinh Anh Tuan bi danh hoi dong vo dau”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, April 22, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/activ-brut-beate-04222015095116.html> (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹³⁸ Ibid. See also status posted by blogger Doan Trang on his Facebook page, April 22, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pham.doan.trang/posts/10153460128183322?pnref=story> (accessed April 22, 2015).

¹³⁹ A copy of the police notice was posted on blogger Pham Doan Trang’s Facebook page, January 8, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10154083701608322&set=pb.641613321.-2207520000.1467178494.&type=3&theater> (accessed June 29, 2016).

Hanoi.¹⁴⁰ Upon leaving the discussion, he was followed by three men in civilian clothing who knocked him off his motorbike and beat him in the middle of the street.¹⁴¹ He suffered multiple scratches and bruises.¹⁴² His cell phone was also smashed and destroyed.

Attacks on Chu Manh Son, Tran Thi Nga, Truong Minh Tam, Le Thi Huong, Phan Van Khanh, and Le Dinh Luong, August 28, 2015

On the morning of August 28, 2015, a group of six people—former political prisoner Chu Manh Son, activists Tran Thi Nga, Truong Minh Tam, Le Thi Huong and her husband Phan Van Khanh, and Le Dinh Luong—were assaulted after paying a visit to Tran Minh Nhat at Lam Ha district, Lam Dong province, shortly after he was released after completing a four-year sentence for allegedly being involved in the foreign-based political party Viet Tan. A total of about a dozen bloggers and activists went to his house to welcome him home.¹⁴³



Chu Manh Son after being assaulted in Lam Dong on August 28, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

The next morning Truong Minh Tam, Tran Thi Nga, and Chu Manh Son took a bus to the city of Da Lat.¹⁴⁴ Their bus was stopped by a group of 20 men in civilian clothing, three of whom boarded the bus and dragged them out. One man covered Tran Thi Nga's mouth, punched

¹⁴⁰ Quoc Phuong, “Diplomats attended human rights discussion at a café in Hanoi” (“Ngoai giao du café nhan quyen o Ha Noi”), *BBC Vietnamese*, March 21, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2014/03/140320_vn_human_right_cafe_hanoi (accessed March 22, 2014).

¹⁴¹ “Hanoi: An account of the discussion on the Rights to freedom of movement by the Network of Vietnamese Bloggers” (“Ha Noi: Tuong thuat buoi thao luan cua MLBVN ve Quyen tu do di lai”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), March 21, 2014, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2014/03/ha-noi-tuong-thuat-buoi-thao-luan-cua.html> (accessed March 22, 2014).

¹⁴² See Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, “A blogger was beaten for attending a human rights discussion at a café” (“Blogger bi danh vi tham gia café nhan quyen”), Video interview was posted on Youtube, March 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDl4S7Rtklc> (accessed March 22, 2014). See also BBC Vietnamese, “Attacked after attending a human rights discussion at a café” (“Bi tan cong sau khi du café nhan quyen”), *BBC Vietnamese*, March 21, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/multimedia/2014/03/140321_cafe_nhanquyen_hanoi (accessed March 22, 2014).

¹⁴³ Gia Minh, “Why did the police use force against the people?” (“Vi sao cong an dung vu luc voi dan?”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, August 28, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/activists-beaten-after-visit-newly-released-political-prisoner-gm-08282015081116.html (accessed September 4, 2015).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. See also “Lam Dong police thugs beat and injured visitors of prisoner of conscience Tran Minh Nhat” (“Con an Lam Dong danh do mau nhung nguoi di tham TNL Tran Minh Nhat”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), August 30, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/08/con-lam-ong-o-mau-nhung-nguoi-i-tham.html> (accessed September 6, 2015).

her, and kicked her.¹⁴⁵ Four men kicked Chu Manh Son to the ground, punched him, and kicked him in the head. Several other men attacked Truong Minh Tam.¹⁴⁶

A second group of activists left the house and boarded a bus to Ho Chi Minh City; their bus was also stopped and they too were assaulted. Activists reported being beaten include Le Thi Huong, her husband Phan Van Khanh, and fellow activist Le Dinh Luong.¹⁴⁷



Truong Minh Tam after being assaulted in Lam Dong on August 28, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

Le Thi Huong told a freelance journalist that four men boarded the bus and struck her and her husband “repeatedly on our heads, faces, and bodies.” The abuse did not stop there. As she described it:

Then they dragged me and Khanh off the bus, kicked me in the stomach and in the back. They even stomped on my head with their black shoes after I fell onto the ground. They sprayed tear gas in my husband’s face. They beat us for about 10 minutes and then left. Today, my head and my face are still swollen and my body hurts.¹⁴⁸

The men also dragged Le Dinh Luong off the bus and hit him repeatedly. He described the attack:

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. See also Tran Thi Nga, “We were severely beaten and injured by Lam Dong province’s police” (“Chung toi bi cong an Lam Dong danh trong thuong”), post to “Dan lam bao”, August 29, 2015: <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/08/chung-toi-bi-cong-lam-ong-anh-trong.html> (accessed September 6, 2015).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Cong Nguyen, “An account of Lam Dong province’s police attacking dissidents who went to visit Tran Minh Nhat” (“Tuong trinh su viec cong an tinh Lam Dong tan cong nhung nguoi bat dong chinh kien khi den tham Tran Minh Nhat”), *Dan luan*, August 30, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150830/cong-nguyen-tuong-trinh-su-viec-cong-an-tinh-lam-dong-tan-cong-nhung-nguoi-bat-dong> (accessed September 6, 2015).



Le Dinh Luong after being assaulted in Lam Dong on August 28, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

They snatched my tablet and smashed it against the side of the bus. They hit me repeatedly in my face, punched me in the ribs, and kicked me in the head. They beat me for about five minutes in the bus, then dragged me off the bus and beat me for another 10 minutes. I have many bruises and swollen spots; I am in a lot of pain.¹⁴⁹

Tran Thi Nga and Chu Manh Son went to the Lam Dong province police headquarters to report the attack.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Tran Thi Nga, “We were severely beaten and injured by Lam Dong province’s police” (“Chúng tôi bị công an Lam Dong đánh trong thương”).

Attacks on Truong Minh Tam, August 24 and 28, 2015

On the afternoon of August 24, 2015, rights activist Truong Minh Tam (also known as Truong Ba Khong) was on the way home from Prison No.5 in Thanh Hoa province where he had gone to pick up paperwork regarding his 2013 conviction and one-year imprisonment for alleged fraud when two men in civilian clothing attacked him.¹⁵¹ One of the men held Truong Minh Tam while the other snatched his paperwork and his iPad and threw them into a nearby stream.¹⁵² Four days later, he was beaten after visiting former political prisoner Tran Minh Nhat and suffered multiple cuts and bruises on his face and neck.¹⁵³

Truong Minh Tam was also detained from April 28 to May 4, 2016 by the police of Ha Tinh province for carrying out a video interview with villagers at Ky Anh district, Ha Tinh province, about the mass die-off of fish that had occurred at the beginning of April.¹⁵⁴ He told a reporter:

During these six days, I was beaten, sometimes I was stripped of my clothes and forced to make statements the way they wanted.¹⁵⁵ I found myself being treated like an animal in front of government officials. Why did I say so? Because when I was being interrogated, they requested that I wear

¹⁵¹ According to Truong Minh Tam, the arrest and conviction were bogus. During the investigation, he says, police asked him many questions about his social and human rights activism. His trial in October 2013 was closed to the public. None of his family members were allowed to attend. See also Gia Minh, “An anti-China activist completed his prison term” (“Mot thanh nien hoat dong chong Trung Quoc man han tu”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, October 7, 2014, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/jail-acti-free-fr-prison-10072014055207.html (accessed September 6, 2015). Truong Minh Tam went on a tour to campaign for the releases of political prisoners in the summer of 2015. He testified before the US Congress on June 11, 2015. See also TN, “Vietnam’s prisoners of conscience testified about human rights before the US Congress” (“Tu nhan luong tam Viet Nam dieu tran nhan quyen tai Quoc hoi My”), *Nguoi Viet*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.nguoi-viet.com/absolutenm2/templates/viewarticlesNVO.aspx?articleid=208647&zoneid=431> (accessed September 6, 2015); Dang Hoai An, “Former prisoner Truong Minh Tam was despicably revenged” (“Cuu tu nhan Truong Minh Tam bi tra thu hen ha”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), August 26, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/08/cuu-tu-nhan-truong-minh-tam-bi-tra-thu.html> (accessed September 6, 2015).

¹⁵² Ibid. See also An Thien, “Police thugs beat Truong Minh Tam and destroyed his belongings” (“Anh Truong Minh Tam bi con an danh dap va huy hoai tai san”), *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network*, August 24, 2015, <http://www.sbtn.tv/vi/tin-viet-nam/anh-truong-minh-tam-bi-con-danh-dap-va-huy-hoai-tai-san.html> (accessed September 6, 2015).

¹⁵³ For more on this, see the case of attack against activists and bloggers on August 28, 2015 in this report.

¹⁵⁴ Tuyet Thanh, “Discovering those who incited the people about the dead fish in the Central region” (“Phat hien doi tuong giat day kich dong vu ca chet o mien Trung”), *Viet Nam Tin Nhanh*, May 2, 2016, <http://vntinnhanh.vn/tin-24h/nong-phat-hien-doi-tuong-phan-dong-viet-tan-giat-day-kich-dong-vu-ca-chet-o-mien-trung-99551> (accessed May 2, 2016).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

absolutely nothing. Which meant, to be honest, I was interrogated while being naked. I found that horrifying in a civilized society.¹⁵⁶

In an interview with a different journalist, Truong Minh Tam recalled:

They hit me and kicked me while I had not a shred of clothes to cover my body. They beat me at about 3 a.m. on April 29, 2016.¹⁵⁷

Attacks on Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Others, June 25, 2015

Several dozen land rights activists and bloggers went to Prison No. 6 in Nghe An province on June 25, 2015 to welcome land rights activist Trinh Ba Khiem, who was released that day.¹⁵⁸ Blogger Nguyen Tuong Thuy told a reporter at RFA:

There were many thugs, more than the number of villagers from Duong Noi ward, wearing civilian clothing. We thought they were policemen in civilian clothes, or thugs. They surrounded us and beat many of us brutally. Many of us suffered injuries. Most of those who accompanied Duong Noi people were beaten, including Truong Van Dung, Ms. Mai Thanh and myself. Trinh Ba Khiem's two sons were brutally beaten;



Trinh Ba Tu after being assaulted in Nghe An on June 25, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

¹⁵⁶ Hoa Ai, “Former prisoner of conscience Truong Minh Tam: ‘I want to flee from my country’” (“Cuu tu nhan luong tam Truong Minh Tam: ‘Toi muon tron chay khoi dat nuoc minh’”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 9, 2016, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/former-prisoner-conscience-truong-minh-tam-wants-flee-country-ha-05082016092112.html (accessed May 9, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Huyen Trang, “To provide news about dead fish in the central coast, many journalists were arrested, detained and beaten” (“Dua tin ve ca chet o mien Trung, nhieu phong vien bi bat, tam giu, danh dap”), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, May 6, 2016, <http://www.tinmungchonguoi ngheo.com/blog/2016/05/06/dua-tin-ve-ca-chet-o-mien-trung-nhieu-phong-vien-bi-bat-tam-giu-danh-dap/> (accessed May 6, 2016).

¹⁵⁸ Trinh Ba Khiem is a land rights activist. He was arrested in April 2014 and charged with “resisting those who are on public duty” in accordance with article 257 of the 2009 penal code. In September 2014, he was sentenced to 18 months in prison. In November 2014, during an appeal trial, his sentence was reduced to 15 months. In prison, his prison term was reduced by another month.

Trinh Ba Tu was bloodied and had a swollen eye. They even beat women.
Extremely cruel.¹⁵⁹

Several activists had to seek medical treatment at Tan Ky hospital in Nghe An province.¹⁶⁰

Attack on Dinh Quang Tuyen, May 19, 2015

Activist Dinh Quang Tuyen (also known as Tuyen xich lo) was attacked by two unknown men in Ho Chi Minh City on the morning of May 19, 2015. He was riding a bicycle to exercise when the two, wearing surgical masks, stopped him and punched him in the face.¹⁶¹ The attackers fled the scene soon afterward.¹⁶² Dinh Quang Tuyen suffered a broken nose and had to undergo an operation a few days later.¹⁶³

Dinh Quang Tuyen became known in the summer of 2014 through his anti-China activism. In June 2014, he was briefly detained by the police for carrying out an individual protest outside the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Ho Chi Minh City urging the Vietnamese government to file a

¹⁵⁹ Gia Minh, “Welcoming prisoner of conscience Trinh Ba Khiem and were assaulted” (“Di don tu nhan luong tam Trinh Ba Khiem bi danh hoi dong”), Radio Free Asia, June 25, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/activ-brut-beaten-06252015070744.html (accessed September 6, 2015).

¹⁶⁰ Chau Van Thi, “Thugs attacked those who went to receive prisoner of conscience Trinh Ba Khiem” (“Con do tan cong nhung nguoi di don TNLT Trinh Ba Khiem”), *Dan luan*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150624/con-do-tan-cong-nhung-nguoi-di-don-tnl-t-trinh-ba-khiem> (accessed September 6, 2015). See also “The police of prison No. 6 (Nghe An) beat and spilled blood of a member of land petitioner Trinh Ba Khiem” (“Cong an trai giam so 6 (Nghe An) danh do mau gia dinh dan oan Trinh Ba Khiem”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), June 25, 2015, http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/06/cong-trai-giam-so-6-nghe-an-ap-gia-inh_25.html (accessed September 6, 2015).

¹⁶¹ Chau Van Thi, “Rights activist Dinh Quang Tuyen was attacked in Ho Chi Minh City” (“Nha hoat dong Dinh Quang Tuyen bi tan cong o TpHCM”), *Dan luan*, May 19, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150518/nha-hoat-dong-dinh-quang-tuyen-bi-tan-cong-o-tphcm> (accessed May 20, 2015). Also see “Another activist was severely beaten by thugs” (“Them mot nha hoat dong bi con do danh trong thuong”), *RFA Vietnamese*, May 19, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/one-more-activi-beaten-05192015084833.html> (accessed May 20, 2015); and “Them mot nha hoat dong ‘bi hanh hung’ [Another activist was ‘assaulted’].” *BBC Vietnamese*, May 20, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2015/05/150520_dinh-quang-tuyen-interview (accessed May 22, 2015).

¹⁶² “Dinh Quang Tuyen was beaten by thuggish secret agents and his blood was spilled” (“Anh Dinh Quang Tuyen bi con an mat vu danh do mau”), “Dan lam bao” May 20, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/05/anh-inh-quang-tuyen-bi-con-mat-vu-anh-o.html> (accessed May 20, 2015).

¹⁶³ Hoa Ai, “Beating people by security agents who disguised as thugs was a bad solution” (“An ninh gia danh con do danh dan la ha sach”), *RFA Vietnamese*, June 16, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/vn-use-more-plnclthe-bea-peop-06162015065942.html (accessed June 16, 2015).



Dinh Quang Tuyen after being assaulted in Ho Chi Minh City on May 19, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

lawsuit against China over a territorial dispute.¹⁶⁴ He was detained again in April 2015 for a few hours, during which a police officer reportedly threatened to shoot and kill him.¹⁶⁵

Attack on Nguyen Chi Tuyen, May 11, 2015

Activist Nguyen Chi Tuyen (also known as Anh Chi) was assaulted in Hanoi on the morning of May 11, 2015 after taking his son to elementary school. On the way home, Nguyen Chi Tuyen was beaten near his house by a group of five unknown men. He told a reporter at RFA that the men blocked his way and attacked him. “They used some tools that I could not identify right away, instead of using hands and feet to punch and kick, and struck me on my head and my face.”¹⁶⁶ A friend who visited Tuyen at the hospital after the attack

¹⁶⁴ Gia Minh, “Ho Chi Minh City: Being arrested for shouting anti-China slogans” (“TPHCM: Bi bat vi ho khau hieu chong Trung Quoc”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, June 22, 2014, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/anti-cn-indivi-detain-06222014050442.html (accessed June 16, 2015).

¹⁶⁵ “Dinh Quang Tuyen is currently under police arrested” (“Sai Gon: Anh Dinh Quang Tuyen dang bi CA bat”), post to “Dan lam bao” (blog), April 4, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/04/sai-gon-anh-inh-quang-tuyen-bi-ca-bat.html> (accessed May 20, 2015).

¹⁶⁶ “Human rights activist Nguyen Chi Tuyen was assaulted” (“Nha hoat dong nhan quyen Nguyen Chi Tuyen bi hanh hung”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 11, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/vietnamnews/activis-atk-by-thugs-05112015084528.html> (accessed May 12, 2015).



Nguyen Chi Tuyen after being assaulted in Hanoi on May 11, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Luan

said, “Tuyen’s head had a 6 cm wound.... His arms, legs, and face were all bruised. There was a contusion on his eye and bad bruises behind his right ear, which caused him great pain to the touch.”¹⁶⁷ He was reported with injuries on his head, left eye, right ear, and lip and had six stitches.¹⁶⁸

Nguyen Chi Tuyen is a rights campaigner who has participated in many anti-China and pro-environment protests over the last five years.¹⁶⁹ He has repeatedly faced police intimidation, harassment, detention, and interrogation.

¹⁶⁷ Mac Lam, “From prison to assault on the street” (“Tu nha giam toi hanh hung tren duong pho”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, May 12, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/from-prison-to-stree-assault-05122015051939.html (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹⁶⁸ “The public was outraged when blogger Nguyen Chi Tuyen was attacked by ‘thugs’” (“Du luan phan no khi Blogger Nguyen Chi Tuyen bi ‘con do’ tan cong”), post to “Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo” (blog), May 11, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/05/11/du-luan-phan-no-khi-blogger-nguyen-chi-tuyen-bi-con-do-tan-cong/> (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹⁶⁹ Chau Van Thi, “Human rights activist Nguyen Chi Tuyen was brutally assaulted” (“Nha hoat dong nhan quyen Nguyen Chi Tuyen bi hanh hung mot cach da man”), *Dan luan*, May 11, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150510/nongnha-hoat-dong-nhan-quyen-nguyen-chi-tuyen-bi-hanh-hung-mot-cach-da-man> (accessed May 12, 2015).

Attacks on Nguyen Hong Quang, March 25, 2015

Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang was assaulted on March 25, 2015, when he, Le Quang Du, and three other people, including Quang's son Nguyen Quang Trieu, went to a rental house in the town of Ben Cat, Binh Duong province, to retrieve their belongings.¹⁷⁰ According to Nguyen Hong Quang, a group of about seven or eight men approached them, kicked them, and used iron stools to hit them. He said:

They beat my son [Nguyen Quang Trieu], then hit Y Thieu on his head. They tried to beat pastor Du but he was able to flee. Then 20 other people joined them; they beat us repeatedly, viciously kicking us and threatening to kill us. Nguyen Quang Trieu was beaten the hardest. They used iron rods to hit him on his arms, shins, and head and spilled his blood. I had a finger crushed and suffered five injuries on my face and my head.¹⁷¹



Nguyen Hong Quang after being assaulted in Binh Duong on January 18, 2015. © 2015 Private/Viet Nam Thoi Bao



Nguyen Quang Trieu after being assaulted in Binh Duong on March 25, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

On January 18, 2015, Mennonite Pastor Huynh Thuc Khai visited Quang. As Khai left, he was attacked by unknown men and dropped his glasses.¹⁷² When Quang went outside to

¹⁷⁰ Duc Thien, "Two pastors were assaulted, but the police only made a record" ("Hai muc su bi hanh hung nhung cong an chi lap bien ban"), *Chua Cuu The*, March 27, 2015, <http://www.chuacuuthe.com/2015/03/hai-muc-su-bi-hanh-hung-nhung-cong-an-chi-lap-bien-ban/> (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹⁷¹ Ibid. See also "Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang continues to be assaulted by police" ("Muc su Nguyen Hong Quang tiep tuc bi CA hanh hung"), post to "Dan lam bao" (blog), March 25, 2015, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2015/03/muc-su-nguyen-hong-quang-tiep-tuc-bi-ca.html> (accessed March 25, 2015).

¹⁷² Gia Minh, "Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang was badly beaten again" ("Muc su Nguyen Hong Quang lai bi danh trong thuong"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, January 19, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/menno-pastor-sever-beaten-01192015060516.html (accessed May 12, 2015).

help him look for the glasses, the men attacked him, too.¹⁷³ According to Quang, a uniformed police officer witnessed the attack but left the scene without saying or doing anything. Quang was hospitalized with a broken nose and reported with blood clots in his belly.¹⁷⁴ Quang reported the attack to the police of Thanh Loc ward.

On January 1, 2015, members of an independent Mennonite house church attempted to gather at Pastor Quang's house, but the meeting was dispersed with force by the police, members of the local civilian defense force, and security agents in civilian clothing. Many people including Pastor Quang were reportedly beaten.¹⁷⁵

Nguyen Hong Quang and Le Quang Du belong to independent Mennonite house churches in Ho Chi Minh City.

Attacks on Nguyen Thanh Ha and Lai Son Tien, March 18, 2015

On March 18, 2015, activists Nguyen Thanh Ha and Lai Son Tien went to visit a number of poor children in Duong Noi ward, Ha Dong district, Hanoi. On their way home, they were followed by four men who used sticks to hit Lai Son Tien, who was driving the motorbike.¹⁷⁶ After the motorbike crashed, the attackers used sticks and helmets to beat the two activists.¹⁷⁷ According to Nguyen Thanh Ha:

¹⁷³ Ibid. See also Huynh Trong Hieu, "Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang – in charge of Mennonite Church was assaulted" ("Muc su Nguyen Hong Quang – Quan nhiem Hoi Thanh Mennonite bi hanh hung"), *Giao hoi Phat giao Viet Nam Thong nhap*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.ghpgvntn.net/muc-su-nguyen-hong-quang-quan-nhiem-hoi-thanh-mennonite-bi-hanh-hung/> (accessed September 24, 2015).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ "Mennonite church is repressed again on the first day of 2015" ("Hoi thanh Mennonite lai bi dan ap tai Quan 12 vao ngay dau nam 2015"), *Dan luan*, January 1, 2015, <https://www.danluan.org/tin-tuc/20150101/hoi-thanh-mennonite-lai-bi-dan-ap-tai-quan-12-vao-ngay-dau-nam-2015> (accessed March 25, 2015). According to an unconfirmed source, in the morning of June 6, 2015, Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang and his son Nguyen Quang Trieu, Pastor Le Quang Du and two other people were attacked by a group of men in civilian clothing and policemen in uniforms. "Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang was attacked by 'thugs'" ("Muc su Nguyen Hong Quang bi 'con do' hanh hung"), *Dan chim Viet*, June 6, 2015, <http://www.danchimviet.info/archives/96235/muc-su-nguyen-hong-quang-bi-con-do-hanh-hung/2015/06> (accessed September 24, 2015). See also Hoi dong Lien ton Viet Nam, "A letter condemning the communist government's repression and harassment against the religious council" ("Khang thu ve viec Hoi dong bi nha cam quyen csvn sach nhieu dan ap"), *Tin mung cho nguoi ngheo*, October 11, 2015, <http://www.tinmungchonguoingheo.com/blog/2015/10/11/hoi-dong-lien-ton-viet-nam-khang-thu-ve-viec-hoi-dong-bi-nha-cam-quyen-csvn-sach-nhieu-dan-ap/> (accessed October 25, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ "Two members from the Save the Land Petitioners group were brutally beaten" ("Ha Noi: Hai thanh vien nhom Cuu Lay Dan Oan bi danh dap da man"), "Dan lam bao" March 19, 2015: <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com.au/2015/03/ha-noi-hai-thanh-vien-nhom-cuu-lay-dan.html> (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹⁷⁷ Mac Lam, "Who will take responsibility for thugs' behavior?" ("Ai chiu trach nhiem voi hanh vi cua con do?"), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese, March 20, 2015, http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/who-are-responsible-for-thugs-actions-ml-03202015074023.html (accessed May 12, 2015).



Lai Son Tien after being assaulted in Hanoi on March 18, 2015. © 2015 Private/Dan Lam Bao

Tien fainted. There was blood coming out from his mouth. They beat and bruised his face. He was driving and could not react to such thuggish action. They beat me with sticks on my nape and my shoulders. My hand was sprained when I tried to ward off their beating. I shouted “robbers, robbers,” and people came over. Only then the thugs fled.¹⁷⁸

Nguyen Thanh Ha and Lai Son Tien did not report the incident to the police because they believed that it would be covered up by the police.¹⁷⁹

Attacks on Nguyen Thi Luyen, Pham Thi Nhung, and Suot, February 17, 2015

Land rights activists Nguyen Thi Luyen, Pham Thi Nhung, and a woman named Suot were assaulted on the morning of February 17, 2015. The three women and two other women

¹⁷⁸ HT, “Two members from the Save the Land Petitioners Group were assaulted” (“Hai thanh vien Nhom Cuu Lay Dan Oan bi hanh hung”), *Chua Cuu The*, March 19, 2015, <http://www.chuacuuthe.com/2015/03/hai-thanh-vien-nhom-cu-lay-dan-oan-bi-hanh-hung/> (accessed May 12, 2015).

¹⁷⁹ Mac Lam, “Who will take responsibility for thugs’ behavior” (“Ai chiu trach nhiem voi hanh vi cua con do?”), Radio Free Asia Vietnamese.

went to the house of the chairman of Bac Giang province to plead their cases. The police detained them and accused them of disrupting public order. They were taken to the police headquarters of Hoang Van Thu ward in the city of Bac Giang.¹⁸⁰

That afternoon they were released. As soon as Pham Thi Nhuong walked out of the police station, she was attacked by a group of men including people she recognized as members of the civilian defense force, police in uniform, and security agents in civilian clothing. They slapped her repeatedly and bloodied her mouth.¹⁸¹ On their way home, Nguyen Thi Luyen and Suot were attacked by four men in raincoats who had their faces covered.¹⁸² They used sticks to hit the two women repeatedly. After they left, the women were taken to a nearby hospital.¹⁸³



Huynh Cong Thuan after being assaulted in Ho Chi Minh City on September 8, 2011. © 2011 Private/Dan Lam Bao

Attack on Huynh Cong Thuan, January 26, 2015

On January 25 and 26, 2015, two unknown men blocked the house of land rights activist Huynh Cong Thuan and prevented him from leaving his house. As Huynh Cong Thuan tried to leave his house on January 26, one of the men burst in and attacked him.¹⁸⁴ He reported the case to the police.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ “Bac Giang land rights petitioners were beaten on the last day of lunar year” (“Dan oan Bac Giang bi danh ngay 29 Tet”), Defend the Defenders, news release, February 19, 2015, <http://www.vietnamhumanrightsdefenders.net/2015/02/19/tu-anh-tu-dan-oan-bac-giang-bi-danh-ngay-29-tet/> (accessed May 20, 2015). See also “Association of Former prisoners of conscience condemn and protest against violence inflicted upon human rights defenders (5/2015)” (“Hoi Cuu Tu nhan luong tam len an va phan doi hanh dong bao luc ham hai nguoi bao ve nhan quyen (5/2015)”), post to “Bauxite Vietnam” (blog), May 22, 2015, <http://boxitvn.blogspot.com/2015/05/hoi-cuu-tu-nhan-luong-tam-len-va-phan.html> (accessed May 22, 2015).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ “Huynh Cong Thuan was assaulted” (“Anh Huynh Cong Thuan bi hanh hung”), *Viet Bao*, January 27, 2015, <https://vietbao.com/a232860/anh-huynh-cong-thuan-bi-hanh-hung> (accessed March 3, 2016).

¹⁸⁵ Huynh Cong Thuan’s Facebook page, “An urgent call for help” (“Thu keu cuu khan cap”), February 6, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/hu%E1%BB%B3nh-c%C3%B4ng-thu%E1%BA%ADn/th%C6%B0-k%C3%AAu-c%E1%BB%A9u-kh%E1%BA%A9n-c%E1%BA%A5p-07022015/793350927380646/> (accessed March 7, 2016).

This was not the first time Huynh Cong Thuan had been attacked. In September 2011, he was attacked in a café by a group of three unknown men.¹⁸⁶ He heard the café owner call one of them “police officer Tam.” The other two struck him on the head with a bottle.¹⁸⁷ Huynh Cong Thuan was taken to the hospital for urgent treatment. He reported the incident to the police.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. See also Huynh Cong Thuan, “Blogger Huynh Cong Thuan told the story of being attacked” (“Blogger Huynh Cong Thuan ke chuyen bi tan cong”), Originally published by *DCV Online* and reposted to “Dan lam bao” (blog), September 20, 2011, <http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com/2011/09/blogger-huynh-cong-thuan-ke-chuyen-bi.html> (accessed March 7, 2016).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Huynh Cong Thuan, “Condemning and denouncing police’s abuse” (“Don to cao va to giac cong an long hanh”), post to “Huynh Cong Thuan” (blog), April 28, 2013, <http://huynhcongthuan.blogspot.com/2013/04/thanh-pho-ho-chi-minh-ngay-04-nam-2013.html> (accessed March 7, 2016).

III. Recommendations

To the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

- Leaders at national, provincial, and local levels should publicly and unambiguously condemn physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such acts are illegal and will not be tolerated, and that anyone involved in ordering or facilitating such attacks will be held responsible.
- Immediately order thorough and impartial investigations of all cases in which rights bloggers and activists are assaulted, intimidated, or threatened; prosecutors should bring charges against all persons credibly implicated in the attacks and other criminal acts.
- Leaders at the national level should hold provincial and local leaders accountable for acts of violence against rights bloggers and activists that occur under their watch.
- Hold accountable all officials found responsible for ordering, facilitating, or tolerating violence against or intimidation of rights bloggers and activists through prosecutions or dismissal, as appropriate.
- Allow journalists to investigate and report freely on attacks against rights bloggers and activists.

To the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security

- Publicly and unambiguously condemn physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such acts are illegal and will not be tolerated.
- Create an independent investigatory taskforce with the resources necessary to conduct thorough, impartial, and transparent investigations of all physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, and bring to account all people, including police officials, responsible for such acts.

- Hold police responsible when they are present but fail to intervene to stop assaults on rights activists and bloggers, or fail to investigate rigorously allegations of violence against such individuals.
- Launch an investigation aimed at identifying the causes for and individuals behind physical attacks on rights activists and bloggers and develop recommendations for preventing and responding more systematically and effectively to such assaults.

To the Vietnamese National Assembly

- The VNA should issue a resolution that publicly and unambiguously condemns physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such acts are illegal and will not be tolerated.
- Hold public hearings on physical assaults and other forms of harassment of and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, and invite testimony from the public, victims, and witnesses, while ensuring that those who come forward are protected from any intimidation or retaliation.
- Repeal or amend vaguely worded “national security” provisions in the penal code that are being used to criminalize peaceful dissent. These include: “activities aiming to overthrow the people’s administration” (penal code article 79, penalty up to death sentence); “undermining national unity policy” (article 87, penalty up to 15 years in prison); “conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” (article 88, penalty up to 20 years); “disrupting security” (article 89, penalty up to 15 years); and “supplemental punishment” which strips former prisoners convicted of “national security” crimes of certain rights, puts them on probation for up to five years, and allows confiscation of part or all of their property (article 92); and “abusing rights to democracy and freedom to infringe upon the interests of the State and the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and citizens” (article 258, penalty up to seven years).

To Donor Agencies and Concerned Countries including the US, the EU, the UK, Japan, Australia, the UN, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank

- Publicly and privately express strong concerns to Vietnamese officials about physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against rights bloggers and activists, emphasizing that such assaults and misconduct violate both Vietnamese and international law and that perpetrators should be punished.
- Raise the duty to prevent, investigate, and punish physical assaults and other forms of harassment and retaliation against citizens with Vietnamese authorities in legal reform and security sector training programs, including relevant educational initiatives.

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NO COUNTRY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Assaults on Bloggers and Democracy Campaigners in Vietnam

The Vietnamese government has long arrested and prosecuted domestic human rights activists, using rights-violating laws and Communist Party-controlled courts and police. But the recent explosion of internet-driven activism in the country has coincided with the appearance of another frightening instrument of political repression: physical assaults on rights activists carried out by violent plainclothes thugs who appear to be acting with the knowledge or permission of the authorities. Beatings take place in streets, cafés, and even inside police stations. Assaultants sometimes attack victims in front of uniformed police who do nothing to intervene. In many cases, assailants wear surgical masks to hide their identities. Some activists have been abducted, taken away in cars or vans, beaten, and then abandoned in deserted areas. In almost no cases covered in this report have perpetrators been held accountable for their actions.

No Country for Human Rights Activists documents the proliferation of this brutal instrument of state repression in recent years. Through a close examination of 36 cases, the report demonstrates the commonplace nature of these attacks and provides evidence linking some of the perpetrators to state security services.

The report concludes by calling for a series of concrete measures to put an end to this practice. Vietnamese leaders should publicly and unambiguously condemn these attacks. The government should order the Ministry of Public Security to ensure thorough and impartial investigations of all incidents of beatings reported by bloggers and activists. At the same time, the National Assembly should repeal or amend provisions in the penal code that criminalize peaceful dissent.



Activists protest violent assaults in Hanoi. The placards read “Strongly against villainous violence” and “Need to bring perpetrators to light”, May 2015.

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