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Vietnam: Human rights defenders' sentences upheld

On 10 July 2018, the Hanoi Higher People's Court upheld the sentences of **Vũ Quang Thuận**, **Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh**, and **Trần Hoàng Phúc**. The defenders were sentenced to a cumulative 20 years and six months in prison, and 13 years of probation or house arrest, having been found guilty of "conducting anti-state propaganda" by the People's Court of Hanoi in January 2018.

[Vũ Quang Thuận](#) and [Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh](#) are leaders of the **Vietnam Progressive Movement** (*Phong Trào Dân Tộc Chấn Hưng Nước Việt*). As part of their work in support of the Movement's ideals of "Democracy, Progress, Humanity, Peace", the two defenders produce a Youtube channel discussing political issues and promoting human rights.

[Trần Hoàng Phúc](#) is a law student and the Founder/President of the **Vietnamese Students for Human Rights Association**. In 2016, he supported campaigns for stronger environmental rights protections and proper compensation for victims of the 2016 Formosa pollution catastrophe in central Vietnam.

On 1 March 2017, Vũ Quang Thuận and Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh uploaded a video series entitled "Guide to Lawful Protest". This video series is believed to have been the motivation for their arrest two days later, on 3 March 2017.

On 29 June 2017, five police officers arrived at Trần Hoàng Phúc's apartment without a warrant. According to local activists, the police then drove the defender to an unknown location. Trần Hoàng Phúc was tried with Vũ Quang Thuận and Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh on 31 January 2018.

According to the indictment, Vũ Quang Thuận received an eight-year prison sentence, followed by five years of house arrest for posting video clips on the Internet and "possessing materials with anti-socialist state content". Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh received six and a half years' imprisonment with four years of house arrest under the same charges. Trần Hoàng Phúc was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, to be followed by four years of probation for assisting in the storage of materials and the sharing of three video clips. Citing insufficient technological capacity, the court refused to allow any of the video clips to be aired during the trial. Instead, the Court based its evaluation of the clips, and therefore the defenders' guilt, on statements by Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communication.

Trần Hoàng Phúc, who suffers from Hepatitis C, has been denied the ability to receive medication from his family, who have not seen him since his detention in June 2017. Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh, who is suffering from gastric distress, has not been allowed to receive healthier food sent by his family to the prison.

Front Line Defenders believes that the indictments and convictions against Vũ Quang Thuận, Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh, and Trần Hoàng Phúc are an attempt to silence their voices and disrupt their work promoting democratic reform and propagation of human rights in Vietnam. Front Line Defenders requests Vietnamese authorities to release the defenders and quash the illegitimate convictions against them.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Vietnam to:

1. Release Vũ Quang Thuận, Nguyễn Văn Đĩnh, and Trần Hoàng Phúc and quash their convictions;
2. Ensure that the treatment of the defenders, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988, and guarantee their health and well-being;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Vietnam are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.