

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20520

September 16, 2026

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We respectfully urge the U.S. Department of State to make the humanitarian release of imprisoned Vietnamese writers and journalists Le Huu Minh Tuan, Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, and Pham Doan Trang a priority in the upcoming high-level U.S.–Vietnam engagement.

We urge U.S. officials to call directly for the release of these four individuals, imprisoned for peaceful writing, journalism, and human rights advocacy. Their cases exemplify Vietnam’s restrictions on free expression and the press while presenting strong connections to the United States.

Vietnam remains one of the most repressive countries for free expression and press freedom, and ranks 174th out of 180 in the [2026 Reporters without Borders \(RSF\)’s World Press Freedom Index](#) and is among the world’s leading jailers of journalists and writers, according to data from [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#), [RSF](#), and [PEN America](#). Against this broader backdrop, the cases below highlight both the human cost of these restrictions and the opportunities for meaningful U.S. engagement.

Le Huu Minh Tuan is in urgent need of humanitarian release. Tuan is a journalist, online commentator, and member of the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAVN) who was sentenced to 11 years in prison in January 2021 under Article 117 for writings concerning government policies and human rights. His health has [deteriorated significantly](#) during his imprisonment. Tuan’s case also has a U.S. connection, as members of his family are U.S. citizens. This connection further underscores the relevance of his case to U.S.–Vietnam engagement, particularly given his ongoing health concerns.

Pham Chi Dung and Nguyen Tuong Thuy were imprisoned for their work as independent journalists and their peaceful exercise of freedom of expression. Dung, founder of the IJVN, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. He was also a contributor to the Voice of America (VOA) Vietnamese Service, making his imprisonment directly relevant to the United States and its commitment to protecting free expression and independent journalism. The U.S. Agency for Global Media [identifies](#) him as a VOA Vietnamese reporter and blogger who was imprisoned for his reporting.

Thuy, a journalist and vice-chairman of the IJAVN, was sentenced to 11 years in prison. He [contributed commentary to Radio Free Asia's Vietnamese Service](#) for six years before his arrest.

The imprisonment of Dung and Thuy, therefore, has an important U.S. nexus: both contributed to U.S.-funded international media organizations whose mission is to provide independent information to audiences living under restrictive media environments.

Pham Doan Trang is a writer, journalist, publisher, and human rights advocate who was sentenced to nine years in prison for her writings on democracy and human rights. The US State Department recognized Trang's work when she was named a [2022 International Woman of Courage](#). Trang was arrested on October 6, 2020, right after the U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue, and has been detained since. Before her arrest, she was an active democracy advocate and a prominent journalist, and she regularly met with U.S. politicians and officials to perform her advocacy.

These four cases also have a broader significance for the U.S.–Vietnam relationship. Vietnam has continued to participate in the U.S.–Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue, providing an established diplomatic mechanism through which the United States can raise individual cases and systemic concerns regarding freedom of expression, association, and the rule of law. We hope any upcoming high-level engagement provides an opportunity to translate that dialogue into a concrete humanitarian outcome.

We respectfully urge the U.S. government to:

1. **Raise the cases of Le Huu Minh Tuan, Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy, and Pham Doan Trang directly with senior Vietnamese officials and call for their immediate humanitarian release;**
2. **Request access for prison visits, independent medical check-ups, fair legal representation, and legal due process** in accordance with international human rights standards for all jailed journalists, writers, and dissidents to ensure their well-being.

The United States has repeatedly affirmed that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an important component of its relationship with Vietnam. These four individuals have been imprisoned for peacefully exercising those freedoms. Their release would represent a meaningful and concrete demonstration of Vietnam's willingness to respond to longstanding U.S. human-rights concerns.

We respectfully ask that the U.S. government use any forthcoming high-level meeting to press for their release and to ensure that these cases receive the highest possible diplomatic attention.

Signed By:

Committee to Protect Journalists

Free Press Unlimited (FPU)

Human Rights Foundation (HRF)

Legal Initiatives for Vietnam (LIV)

PEN America

PEN International

Quê Me: Vietnam Committee on Human Rights

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Vietnamese Abroad PEN Centre

Vietnamese Advocates for Change