

# Nine years in prison for journalist

Pham Doan Trang had reported on a land conflict in which state forces attacked a village in a cloak-and-dagger operation. Now she has been convicted.



Pham Doan Trang wrote countless articles on politics, social justice and human rights

Photo: Advocates for Justice ar

HANOI/BERLIN *dpa/taz* | Prominent human rights activist and journalist Pham Doan Trang has been sentenced to nine years in prison by a court in Vietnam. The judiciary had accused the author, who has won European human rights awards, of "propaganda against the state". The verdict was announced on Tuesday.

Despite decades of openness to foreign investment, the communist country strictly censors the domestic media and is intolerant of those who think differently. Vietnam ranks 175th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' press freedom rankings.

The 43-year-old was arrested in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in October 2020 and taken to the capital, Hanoi. According to human rights groups, she was held in pre-trial detention for more than a year without access to a lawyer.

She has written countless articles, blogs and books on politics, social justice and human rights. She is also co-founder of the online magazine *Luật Khoa* and editor at the online magazine *thevietnamese*.

## Hardness to deter land conflict

"The two media help Vietnamese citizens to understand the country's laws, defend their rights and resist the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party," [Reporters Without Borders](#) praised their work in November.

In January 2020, Trang spoke up on a highly sensitive conflict over land rights in the village of Dong Tam near Hanoi. Three police officers and a village headman, who had represented the residents who were resisting the

After the deadly raid, 30 people were arrested and social networks were censored. The authoritarian regime is extremely tough, according to observers apparently for fear that successful resistance would encourage resistance in other villages in similar conflicts. **Two Dong Tam villagers have since been sentenced to death**, others to long terms.

### **Convicted in Vietnam, awarded several times abroad**

On Monday, the human rights organization **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** called for all criminal charges against her to be dropped and for her immediate release. "The trial against her and the abusive treatment of her violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Vietnam ratified in 1982," it said in a statement.

The Czech human rights organization People in Need Trang had already awarded the "Homo Homini Prize" in 2019 it received the "Press Freedom Award" from Reporters Without Borders in Berlin for particularly effective journalism.