

# Govt irked by 'unsuitable' US prize for jailed dissident



## VIETNAM

Saturday, 19 Mar 2022

The country objected to the United States granting a prize for courage to a dissident writer jailed for nine years for anti-state propaganda, describing her award as "unobjective and unsuitable".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Pham Doan Trang as winner on Monday of an International Women of Courage prize at a ceremony attended by First Lady Jill Biden, where Blinken condemned what he called an unjust imprisonment.

Vietnam's foreign ministry spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang on Thursday said Trang had violated Vietnamese law, so the US prize was "not conducive for the development of bilateral relations."

Hang at a regular briefing said Vietnam's policy was to "always safeguard and promote the basic rights of our citizens, including women's rights."

Ties between former war foes the United States and Vietnam have improved significantly in recent years, with increased trade and investments by US firms, and regular visits by presidents and top officials from Washington.

However, Vietnam's human rights record has been a sticking point in the relationship, with the United States critical of the government's intolerance of dissent and frequent jailing and harassment of those who speak out.

Trang, who published material widely on human rights and alleged police brutality in Vietnam, was

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She was sentenced to nine years in prison in December last year.

“Despite facing threats – constant threats – she continued educating others about their rights,” Blinken said of Trang.

“We condemn her unjust imprisonment. We call for her immediate release,” he said during the ceremony.  
– Reuters

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