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## PEN AMERICA DENOUNCES THE UPCOMING TRIAL AND ARBITRARY DETENTION OF JOURNALIST AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER PHAM DOAN TRANG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 13, 2021

(New York, NY) – The upcoming trial of journalist and human rights defender Pham Doan Trang—set to take place on December 14 despite the strong urging from the United Nations and international organizations to drop all charges against her—highlights the persistence of free expression violations in Vietnam, PEN America said today.

“The international community has made it abundantly clear that the ongoing detention of Pham Doan Trang is unacceptable,” said [Karin Deutsch Karlekar](#), director of Free Expression at Risk Programs at PEN America. “Yet with blatant disregard for international law, the government of Vietnam has continued its efforts to punish her for her peaceful writing and advocacy for human rights. Trang’s detention is, unfortunately, only one of many politically-motivated criminal cases against journalists and human rights defenders that indicate a systemic failure on the part of the Vietnamese

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government to uphold freedom of expression and other fundamental rights. It's also important to note that Vietnam's prosecution of dissidents uniformly falls far short of fair trial standards, and is better understood as sham trials meant to place the judicial seal of approval on governmental repression. Ahead of her December 14 trial, we once again call on the Vietnamese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release her and to drop all charges."

A prolific author and a leading voice in Vietnamese civil society, **Pham Doan Trang** has been recognized internationally for her writings on politics and human rights, making her a target of the state for many years. She was **arrested on October 6, 2020**, just hours after the 2020 United States-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue ended, on charges that criminalize 'making, storing, distributing or disseminating information, documents and items against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.' She is now being charged under Article 88 of the Penal Code for alleged dissemination of anti-State propaganda. Trang was held incommunicado from the date of her arrest until October 19, 2021, when she was finally allowed to meet with one of her lawyers. During her detention, Trang has also been denied access to adequate medical care, raising several serious health concerns, especially given her preexisting conditions which include low blood pressure and chronic pain due to her legs being broken by the police in 2015.

International human rights experts have repeatedly called on the Vietnamese government to amend its Penal Code provisions that do not comply with international human rights law and have expressed alarm that Trang's work to document human rights concerns is being used against her as evidence in a criminal trial. In a **recently published opinion**, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention deemed Trang's **detention arbitrary** due to the Vietnamese government's violation of her right to free expression and right to a fair trial.

On October 27, 2021, PEN America joined 27 other human rights and freedom of expression organizations in signing a **joint letter** to draw attention to Trang's case and call on Vietnamese authorities to end her arbitrary detention and trial, in addition to repealing or substantially amending legislation used to harass and imprison individuals for the exercise of their fundamental rights. According to PEN America's **2020 Freedom to Write Index**, Vietnam jailed the seventh-highest number of writers and intellectuals globally during 2020.



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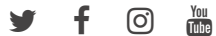
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