

公益社団法人 日本外国特派員協会

## **The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan**

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### **Joint-statement by foreign correspondents' clubs and associations in Asia on Vietnam's jailing of three independent journalists**

The foreign correspondents' clubs and associations of Thailand, Japan, Jakarta, the Philippines, South Asia and Taiwan are deeply concerned by the convictions and harsh prison sentences handed down by a Vietnamese court on Jan. 5 to three Vietnamese journalists, Pham Chi Dung, Nguyen Tuong Thuy and Le Huu Minh Tuan, for "spreading anti-state propaganda," and call for their immediate release.

The three, all members of the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAVN), were convicted of "making, storing, spreading information, materials, items for the purpose of opposing the state" at a one-day trial in the Ho Chi Minh City People's Court.

The court's verdict, cited by state-run media, said the three "had regularly been in contact with regime opponents." Government officials were quoted by Western media saying the journalists had intended to "distort and defame the people's administration, and infringe the interests of the Communist Party of Vietnam and state."

One of the convicted journalists, Pham Chi Dung, 54, previously worked for the government's Department of Internal Affairs and Security but had quit his position in 2013, saying the "Communist Party no longer serves and represents the interests of the majority of the people."

Dung, who received a 15-year jail sentence, founded the IJAVN in 2014 to advocate for press freedom but the state has since declared it a criminal organization. Fellow IJAVN members, Thuy, 69, and younger member Tuan, were each given 11-year prison terms. All three were ordered to serve an additional three years under house arrest after their release.

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The convictions reflect a widening crackdown on dissent and independent media ahead of the ruling Communist Party's five-yearly congress which starts on Jan. 25. They also highlight the growing contradiction between Vietnam's efforts to portray itself as a modern state and friend of the West, and the reality of censorship and repression under one-party rule.

The US Department of State described the sentences as "harsh" and "the latest in a worrisome trend." Amnesty International said they underscored Hanoi's contempt for a free press.

In its annual World Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Vietnam 175 of 180 states. In 2020, Vietnam imprisoned 28 journalists, making it the fourth worst country for jailing journalists behind China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt respectively. At least 15 Vietnamese journalists were in prison as of Dec. 1 2020, including Dung, Thuy and Tuan, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

**Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand (FCCT)**

**Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ)**

**Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP)**

**Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Club (Jakarta FCC)**

**South Asia Foreign Correspondents' Club (South Asia FCC)**

**Taiwan Foreign Correspondents' Club (TFCC)**