

 October 7, 2026

Media Defence files urgent appeal over Viet Nam's kidnapping of Norwegian and Australian human rights defenders



Media Defence has filed an urgent appeal with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention over the abduction, rendition and detention of Nguyen Duc Thuan and Tran Hiep, also known as Ho Pham Hiep Huy.

Mr Thuan, 52, is a Norwegian citizen who has long advocated for human rights in Vietnam alongside Norwegian and European parliamentarians. Mr Hiep, 51, is an Australian citizen who has spent years working on social justice and anti-trafficking initiatives.

The men went missing on the morning of 18 September and were held incommunicado for ten days. On 28 September, Vietnam's Ministry of Public

and documents of state agencies and organisations” after confessing to the illegal crossing and to membership of Viet Tan, a pro-democracy organisation the ministry designated a terrorist organisation in October 2016. No country outside Vietnam recognises that designation, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has described Viet Tan as a peaceful organisation advocating democratic reform.

Civil society organisations and the men’s families strongly dispute the ministry’s account. All available information indicates that they were abducted on Cambodian soil and forcibly taken across the border. The abduction of three men from a third country marks a serious escalation in Vietnam’s transnational repression of dissenters.

Conditions in Vietnamese detention centres and the ill-treatment of **prisoners of conscience** are widely documented. Political prisoners are also routinely denied medical care, and some have reported being told that they would receive no treatment unless they confessed. Mr Thuan has diabetes and requires daily insulin – denying it would put his life at risk.

On 7 October, 29 organisations, including Article 19 and Freedom House, issued a **joint statement** on the three cases.


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