

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung
Office of the Prime Minister
1, Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Brussels, 1st of July 2013

Re: Concerns regarding the arrest and detention of Mr Le Quoc Quan, a prominent human rights defender

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the situation of Mr Le Quoc Quan, a prominent human rights defender, held in solitary detention in Hoa Lo Prison since his arrest in December 2012.

Prior to being disbarred as a lawyer in 2007 on suspicion of engaging in "activities to overthrow the regime", he represented many victims of human rights violations.

The CCBE has been informed that over the past several years, Le Quoc Quan has been the target of multiple hostile acts by Vietnamese authorities. Most notably, he was arrested and detained in 2007 and 2011. In August 2012, he was hospitalised after being severely beaten by unknown assailants. This assault was never investigated by competent authorities.

Furthermore, the CCBE has been informed that in December 2012, Mr Le Quoc Quan was arrested on allegations of tax evasion. Since then, he has been detained in solitary confinement. According to information that we received, it seems that during his detention he has been allowed to communicate with his lawyer only once and has been refused all contact with his family. His trial will take place on 9 July 2013.

The CCBE believes that all hostile acts against Mr Le Quoc Quan, including his arrest and imprisonment, are the result of his peaceful and legitimate activities in the defence of human rights.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1999)

Article 9 paragraph 3 (c) states that:

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, inter alia, to offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore Article 12 States that:

1. Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2. The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that Mr Le Quoc Quan will be subject to a fair trial, fully respectful of fundamental rights and the rule of law. The CCBE also implores you to take all necessary measures to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice in Vietnam, to ensure that all attempts to discredit lawyers and human rights defenders for the legitimate exercise of their professional duties are promptly and effectively stopped and to guarantee the proper application of all the relevant international conventions, including the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers of 1990 and the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1999).

Yours sincerely,



Evangelos TSOUROULIS
CCBE President