

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

**Brussels, 18 March 2014**

**Re: Concerns regarding the sentencing of human rights defender and lawyer Le Quoc Quan**

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 twelve 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 previously wrote to you on 1 July 2013 to express its serious concern over the situation of Mr Le Quoc Quan, a prominent human rights defender and lawyer who over the past several years has been the target of multiple hostile acts by the Vietnamese authorities. Most notably, on 27 December 2013 he was arrested and detained on charges of tax invasion and sentenced to 30 months in prison and monetary penalties.

The CCBE has recently been informed that on 18 February 2014 an appeals court in Hanoi upheld the 30-month verdict against Mr Quan. According to information that we received, it seems that during his detention Mr Quan launched a hunger strike to protest the fact that he has not been allowed access to legal counsel, access to legal and religious books and access to a priest.

The CCBE believes that all hostile acts against Mr Quan, including his arrest and imprisonment, are politically motivated and a reaction to his blog, where he frequently exposes human rights violations by the Vietnamese government.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be*

*threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges your Excellency to take effective steps to ensure that all charges against Mr Le Quoc Quan are immediately and unconditionally dropped. The CCBE also asks you to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Vietnam are able to carry out their professional activities in all circumstances, without fear of reprisal, intimidation or judicial harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI  
President