

## JUST IN CASE I AM IMPRISONED

Saigon, Vietnam  
May 27th, 2019

Dear friends,

No one wants to sit in prison. But if prison is inevitable for freedom fighters, if prison can serve a pre-determined purpose, then we should happily accept it.

Therefore, I have set several goals for my imprisonment (should it happen). Going to prison may help to accomplish some of these goals, but achieving all of them can only be done with your help.

Thus, I would like to share these goals with you, friends, and rely on you to help fulfill them after I am taken into custody. Thank you so much in advance for your support.

### 1. **Advocate for new laws to reform how Vietnam conducts elections and forms its National Assembly.**

I would like you to link my imprisonment with new laws to change how Vietnam conducts elections and forms its National Assembly. Let the public know that I research political rights, especially ones regarding voting and elections. I am among those who have suggested new pieces of legislation to reform elections and the National Assembly, and I am imprisoned partly because of these previous efforts.

A large social movement calling for the adoption of these new laws, whose drafts I have made contributions to, would be ideal.

### 2. **Encourage people to read my books.**

I want my imprisonment to spur greater readership for my books; make them accessible and make them available in all forms: electronic, printed, or audio.

These are the titles that I want to promote most:

- a) *Chính Trị Bình Dân (Politics for the Masses / Politics for the Common People)*;
- b) *Cẩm Nang Nuôi Tù (A Handbook for Families of Prisoners)*;
- c) *Phản Kháng Phi Bạo Lực (On Non-violent Resistance Techniques)*;
- d) *Politics of a Police State*;
- e) *Chúng Ta Làm Báo (Citizen Journalism)*;
- f) All of my publications on voting and elections

### 3. **Take advantage of my imprisonment.**

The Vietnamese government has always used prisoners of conscience (POC) as pawns to trade with foreign governments. By releasing a POC and deporting him or her, the government benefits in several ways: they gain trade deals, neutralize a rallying symbol for the people, and falsely appear to respect human rights, which hedges calls for political reform.

I would hate to see myself become a pawn for the government to trade. Instead, I want my imprisonment to be used not just by foreign governments, but by Vietnamese democracy activists to negotiate with the Vietnamese government, with a focus on new legislation for elections and formation of the National Assembly. It is imperative that Vietnamese democracy activists sit at the negotiating table. Bear in mind: *the lengthier the prison term, the more leverage you have to negotiate with the Vietnamese government and pressure them into doing what we request.*

In other words, I don't want a campaign that calls on the Vietnamese government to simply "free Trang". I want a comprehensive social movement that pushes the government to "free Trang *and* pass new election laws", "free Trang *and* ensure free and fair elections", "free Trang, free elections", and so on.

**Summary of (1), (2) and (3):**

In case I am imprisoned, please tell the public to focus less on freeing me and more on spreading these simple messages:

*"I've read Trang's books, and I support new election laws," or  
"I support Trang, I've read her books, and I support new election laws," or  
"Free and fair elections for Vietnam," or  
"Support independent candidates for the National Assembly."*

**A few more reminders and requests:**

1. Please take care of my mother. Let her know that she and her daughter are not alone. Make sure the police do not harm my mother, my brothers, or my sisters-in-law; they have often been threatened by police.
2. I will not admit guilt, confess, or beg for leniency; do not believe police if they say or indicate otherwise.
3. (However,) I will always assert that I am the author of the books *Chính Trị Bình Dân*, *Cầm Nang Nuôi Tù*, *Phản Kháng Phi Bạo Lực*, and other works published under my name, and I will always assert that I want to abolish dictatorship in Vietnam. I'd like to be described as an author and journalist who writes to raise public awareness regarding democracy and human rights, and who advocates for social change.
4. If possible, send me my guitar and try to have the wardens accept it. For me, the guitar is like my Bible.
5. I don't care about prison terms, so I don't expect defense lawyers to help reduce my sentence, which may be impossible anyway. I would prefer defense lawyers who can work as communication channels between me and the outside world.
6. Do not give me any priority over other prisoners of conscience. Advocate for the others first, then me.
7. If you'd like to advocate for my release, please start a campaign from the third or fourth year and keep in mind the requisite goals I stated above. Ideally, I'd like to be freed and allowed to stay in Vietnam instead of being expelled, with the goals above achieved.

*I don't want freedom for just myself; that's too easy.  
I want something greater: freedom for Vietnam.  
It might seem like some grand goal, but it's totally possible--with your support.*



Pham Doan Trang