

PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION



Le Dinh Nhan - Vietnam

Le Dinh Nhan, the Acting Head of the Institute for the Propagation of the Dharma, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), was arrested on December 29, 1994, for publishing an open letter criticizing government policy on freedom of speech and religious expression.

He was held under “temple arrest” until around mid-1995, when he was transferred to an isolated area in Quangai. Since 2003, he has been at Nguyen Thieu Monastery, Binh Fonh Province, held incommunicado with security guards reportedly permanently stationed at the gates.

Le Dinh Nhan is the author of renowned books on Buddhism and Oriental philosophy for the last thirty years. He is said to be one of the most respected religious leaders of Vietnamese Buddhists.

His life is said to be in great danger due to poor health and lack of medical treatment. In February 2003, it was reported that he was prevented from travelling to Ho Chi Minh City for urgent surgery to remove a painful growth near his right eye. He was also said to be suffering from high blood pressure, chronic arthritis and stomach ulcers. On March 10, 2003, it was reported that he had finally undergone surgery for the growth on his eye in Hanoi, and had been visited by diplomats from the European Union and the USA. On April 2, 2003, he met with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, reported to be the first time in unified Vietnam that a Prime Minister has met with the Head of the UBCV. In October 2003, Le Dinh Nhan was once again in total isolation in Nguyen Thieu Pagoda and said to be denied access to medical care despite very poor health, including dental problems and a painful throat condition. The latest report, in November 2004, said that he was gravely ill in hospital after a stomach haemorrhage.

PEN Canada believes that Le Dinh Nhan has been detained in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We call for his immediate and unconditional release. PEN Canada also urges that Le Dinh Nhan be given any necessary medical treatment in order to improve his health while in detention.

Send appeals to:

His Excellency Tran Duc Luong
President, Socialist Republic of Vietnam
C/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

[Letters may be sent to Embassy of Vietnam in Canada: fax: +1 613 236 0819 or e-mail: vietem@istar.ca.]

Visit www.pencanada.ca/media/Media-LDNSG.pdf for a sample appeal for Le Dinh Nhan.