
For Immediate Release

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Public Statement

The Law Society of Upper Canada Expresses Grave Concerns about the Recent Conviction and Continued Imprisonment of Human Rights Lawyer Le Quoc Quan

Toronto – The Law Society of Upper Canada is concerned about the recent conviction and continued imprisonment of human rights lawyer Le Quoc Quan of Vietnam.

The Law Society first intervened in this case in February 2013. Reliable reports indicated that on December 27, 2012, Le Quoc Quan, human rights lawyer and blogger, was arrested by the police while dropping off his daughter at school and charged under Article 161 of the Vietnamese Criminal Code, which relates to tax evasion. Le Quoc Quan writes a popular blog about human rights abuses. The Law Society's understanding is that he has been subject to arbitrary arrests and ongoing surveillance and harassment as a result of his human rights work. Le Quoc Quan was disbarred following his return to Vietnam from the United States in 2007.

The Law Society understands that Le Quoc Quan remains in detention. On October 2, 2013, he was convicted of evading corporate income tax. The trial took only one day. Le Quoc Quan was sentenced to 30 months in prison and a fine of 1.2 billion dong (approximately \$59,000 USD) was levied against the company of which he is a director. The Hanoi Appeal Court upheld the conviction of Le Quoc Quan on February 18, 2014. Our sources also note that Le Quoc Quan's wife has reported that he is in poor health. Le Quoc Quan's conviction is believed to be politically motivated and intended to prevent him from continuing his legitimate human rights work.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about situations where lawyers who work for the protection and respect of human rights are themselves targeted for exercising their freedoms and rights under international law. International human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* state that respect for human rights is essential to advancing the rule of law. Article 16 of the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states "governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely; and shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or

administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.”

Therefore, the Law Society of Upper Canada calls on the Vietnamese authorities to,

- a. quash the conviction of Le Quoc Quan, release him immediately and guarantee in all circumstances his physical and psychological integrity;
- b. ensure that Le Quoc Quan receives immediate medical attention;
- c. put an end to all acts of harassment Le Quoc Quan and other human rights defenders in Vietnam;
- d. ensure that all lawyers can carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- e. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for 46,200 lawyers and 6,000 paralegals in the Province of Ontario, Canada, and the Treasurer is the head of the Law Society. The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

The Law Society urges the legal community to intervene in support of members of the legal profession in their effort to advance the respect of human rights and to promote the rule of law.

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