



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Vietnam: Opposition to the state**

**Version 5.0**

**September 2025**

# Executive summary

Vietnam is a one-party communist state governed by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), the only legal political party. Although the Vietnamese Constitution guarantees citizens the right to freedom of opinion and speech, of access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations, in practice the CPV does not tolerate public criticism of their human rights practices or allow independent local human rights institutions to form.

Citizens are unable to democratically elect a representative other than from the CPV, as the party controls all electoral bodies and disqualifies any independent candidates. The Vietnamese government has proscribed illegal opposition parties, such as Viet Tan and the Provisional National Government of Vietnam - who operate outside of Vietnam - as terrorist organisations, although they are not recognised as such by the UK.

A person who is a member of an illegal political party and openly expresses their political opposition is likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.

Protestors, journalists, bloggers and activists who openly criticise the state or are perceived critics of the government are likely to attract adverse attention from the authorities. Whether a person is likely to be at real risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on the topics of criticism, the person's profile, their role in any activities including the nature and level of their involvement, and any history of adverse interest.

Whilst there is some tolerance for protests, those who do so on political or sensitive subjects may be subject to intimidation by police or arrest, detention and subsequent release; however, in general this is not sufficiently serious, by its nature and/or repetition, to amount to persecution or serious harm.

Journalists, bloggers and online activists may be monitored and their online content censored and removed. Consideration should be given to the person's credentials and the content, tone, reach and likely government awareness of publications they have authored. The monitoring of online activity and the closure/censorship of online accounts/posts alone is not sufficiently serious by its nature and/or repetition to amount to persecution or serious harm.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities or internally relocate.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 16 September 2025

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of a person's actual or perceived opposition to, or criticism of, the state.
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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#### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

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#### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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### 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its

individual facts.

- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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**Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section**

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## **2. Convention reason(s)**

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **3. Risk**

### **3.1 Political parties**

- 3.1.1 A person who is a member of an illegal political party and openly expresses their political opposition is likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.
- 3.1.2 The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) remains the only legal political party; no other parties are officially allowed to operate. Although elections for the National Assembly and People's Council take place, they are not free and fair, and citizens are unable to choose their own government in practice (see [Political system](#)).
- 3.1.3 Illegal Vietnamese political parties do exist however they are predominantly based abroad. Notable examples include the Viet Tan and the Provisional National Government of Vietnam, both headquartered in California. These organisations have been officially designated as terrorist groups by the Vietnamese government. While the Brotherhood for Democracy also maintains a presence outside of Vietnam, some of its activists also operate within the country (see [Illegal political parties](#)).
- 3.1.4 People affiliated with illegal political parties are subject to arrest and detention under Vietnamese law. They may face charges under national security statutes, including accusations of 'abusing democratic freedoms' or 'conducting activities aimed at overthrowing the government.' Furthermore, those associated with or participating in activities organised by groups

classified as terrorist organisations by Vietnamese authorities may be prosecuted under anti-terrorism legislation. Prison sentences for those associated with terrorist organisations are often lengthy and detention conditions harsh (see [Illegal political parties](#)).

- 3.1.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3.2 Critics and activists

- 3.2.1 Activists who openly criticise the state or are perceived critics of the government are likely to attract adverse attention from the authorities. Whether a person is likely to be at risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on the topics of criticism, the person's profile and their role in any activities including the nature and level of their involvement, and any history of adverse interest.
- 3.2.2 Whilst there is some tolerance for protests, those who do so on political or sensitive subjects may be subject to intimidation by police or arrest, detention and subsequent release. However, in general, this is not sufficiently serious, by its nature and/or repetition, to amount to persecution or serious harm.
- 3.2.3 Vietnam's 2015 Criminal Code contains broad and vaguely worded provisions related to national security, including Articles 109 (activities against the people's government), 117 (spreading anti-state propaganda) and 331 (abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state). Offences carry lengthy prison sentences and the death penalty in some cases, and are used to arrest, detain, and convict people expressing dissenting views and criticism of the CPV (see Protesters and human rights activists- [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.4 People who advocate for human rights in ways perceived to challenge the legitimacy of the CPV and the government have, along with their families, reportedly been subjected to various forms of harassment. This includes repeated police questioning and intimidation. Activists have also reported difficulties enrolling children in school, obtaining official documents, arbitrary tax inspections, and scrutiny of household registration status and financial restrictions such as frozen bank accounts and credit cards (see Protesters and human rights activists- [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.5 The Vietnamese government monitors the online and offline activities of well-known activists. While activists can generally travel within the country, their movements are watched, and they may be stopped from leaving Vietnam to attend human rights events. During politically sensitive times, such as visits from foreign officials, authorities may restrict activists' movements, including keeping them at home (see Protesters and human rights activists- [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.6 Article 25 of the Vietnamese Constitution guarantees citizens the right to freedom of opinion and speech, assembly and to form associations, and hold demonstrations. In practice, the government does not tolerate expression which is critical of the CPV, the government or its policies and restricts the establishment of groups in areas it deems sensitive such as politics, religion and labour rights. It generally prohibits the establishment of private and

independent organisations. Permits are required for group gatherings and those without are banned (see [Constitution](#) and [Ability to protest](#)).

- 3.2.7 In recent years, small-scale peaceful protests related to territorial disputes have taken place. However, demonstrations perceived as opposing the state or government are not tolerated, even when conducted peacefully. Large-scale protests are uncommon. Authorities closely monitor protest activity and may resort to the use of force in response to unauthorised gatherings. Participants in such protests risk facing financial penalties or imprisonment (see [Ability to protest](#) and [Protests on 'sensitive issues'](#)).
- 3.2.8 All land is owned by the state which retains the right to compulsory purchase. Protests held over land seizure and inadequate compensation can be forcibly dispersed and have resulted in protestors and people who comment on the situation on social media being arrested and imprisoned (see [Land disputes](#) and country policy and information note [Vietnam: Ethnic and religious minority groups](#)).
- 3.2.9 Information regarding the number of those detained due to their activism and/or attendance at protests is difficult to assess as sources often include people detained for any type of opposition to the state, including those who are part of religious groups not approved by the authorities. Several sources list the details of those detained. Human Rights Watch claimed that between January 2018 and February 2025, 124 people had been convicted and sentenced to prison under Article 331 of the penal code for expressing views critical of the government. As of July 2025, the 88 Project listed 198 activists as currently detained. However, given the population of over 100 million, the reported numbers are relatively low (see Protesters and human rights activists- [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.10 For information on unauthorised religious groups, see country policy and information note [Vietnam: Ethnic and religious minority groups](#).

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### 3.3 Journalists, bloggers and online activists

- 3.3.1 Journalists, bloggers and online activists who openly criticise the state or are perceived critics of the government are likely to attract adverse attention from the authorities.
- 3.3.2 Whether a person is likely to be at real risk of persecution and/or serious harm will depend on the topics of criticism, the person's profile, their role in any activities including the nature and level of their involvement, and any history of adverse interest. Consideration should be given to the person's journalistic credentials and the content, tone, reach and likely government awareness of publications they have authored.
- 3.3.3 A person may be monitored and their online content censored and removed. The monitoring of online activity and the closure/censorship of online accounts/posts alone is not sufficiently serious by its nature and/or repetition to amount to persecution or serious harm.
- 3.3.4 Whilst the constitution stipulates freedom of the press, the government owns and controls the content of all print, broadcast and electronic media. Independent media operates but on a limited basis, and mainly online (see Traditional media and journalists- [Law](#))



- 3.3.5 The Vietnamese government controls media content and limits reporting to topics it approves. The Ministry of Information and Communication fines media outlets for publishing political or economic news without authorisation. Laws allow for heavy fines and criminal charges against content considered harmful to national interests or distorting historical facts (see Traditional media and journalists- [State treatment](#)).
- 3.3.6 Self-censorship occurs amongst activists and journalists due to fear of dismissal from employment or arrest. Criticism of the government is mostly addressed by independent bloggers outside Vietnam. Journalists are prosecuted under national security laws for anti-state propaganda or abusing democratic freedoms (see Traditional media and journalists- [State treatment](#) and [State treatment of bloggers, online activists and social media users](#)).
- 3.3.7 There are over 78 million internet users in Vietnam and social media usage is common. Websites deemed politically or culturally inappropriate are blocked (see Internet, social media and bloggers- [Access to the internet](#)).
- 3.3.8 The CPV controls online content through its Central Propaganda and Education Commission. Topics like human rights, political dissent, and corruption involving officials are heavily censored or the websites containing the information blocked. The Cybersecurity Law and national social media guidelines are frequently used to justify content removal and financial penalties while Decree 147 enacted in 2024, further tightens control by requiring users to verify their identity and allowing government access to internal search data. The CPV also enforces censorship by pressurising technology companies to remove or block critical material. Major platforms like Facebook, Google, and TikTok comply with most government takedown requests. Internet access is sometimes cut off (see Internet, social media and bloggers- [Censorship and monitoring](#)).
- 3.3.9 Vietnam has reportedly significantly expanded its online monitoring capabilities in recent years. Authorities track social media activity, especially of former prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, and influencers. However, even low-profile users can attract attention if they use certain keywords or repeatedly express critical views. The government uses advanced tools like SocialBeat, an AI-powered social listening software, to monitor billions of online posts daily. Units like Force 47 and Task Force 35 identify and counter online content deemed harmful to the state. These units monitor discussions, manipulate narratives, and allegedly engage in hacking and surveillance of activists (see Internet, social media and bloggers- [Censorship and monitoring](#)).
- 3.3.10 Vietnam continues to arrest and imprison writers, journalists and online activists for expressing views critical of the government and to silence dissent, often using vague national security laws with harsh penalties—including fines up to 100 million dong (£2,851) and prison sentences of up to fifteen years. Data taken from PEN America and the 88 Project show that as of July 2025, 32 writers, including online commentators, journalists and literary writers were detained. However, given the population of over 100 million and nearly 80 million internet users, the reported number of arrests/prosecutions is very low. (see [State treatment of bloggers, online activists and social media users](#) and [Annex A: Table on detained journalists, bloggers and writers](#)).
- 3.3.11 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on

#### **4. Protection**

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.](#)

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#### **5. Internal relocation**

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.](#)

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#### **6. Certification**

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\).](#)

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# Country information

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **27 August 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Sources often refer to ‘activists’ collectively and do not distinguish between the different groups covered by the term so there may be some cross over between different sections. Where the country information relates to a specific group this has been identified. Where activists have been detained and they belong to more than one category identified in this CPIN (human rights activists, political activists or journalists) this has been highlighted.

CPIT have used the 88 Project ‘Database of persecuted activists in Vietnam’ and the PEN America ‘Writer at Risk’ database within the COI. CPIT have cross referenced these databases, checking the personal details of those listed including the arrest dates and details of sentences to produce a table (included at [Annex A: Table on detained journalists, bloggers and writers](#)) showing those who, as of July 2025, were recorded as detained on at least one of the databases. The information contained in the tables is the same across both databases unless otherwise stated.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Legal context

### 7.1 Constitution

- 7.1.1 Article 25 of the Constitution stated that: ‘The citizen shall enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, of access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations. The practice of these rights shall be provided by the law.’<sup>1</sup>
- 7.1.2 Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Vietnam, covering the period of 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, published in March 2024 noted that:  
‘Freedom of expression is protected by the 2013 constitution. However, the Press Law, the Publication Law and the Criminal Code criminalize any activities that are considered “propagandizing against the state,” “conducting propaganda to slander the people’s government; conducting psychological warfare and spreading rumors; creating, storing and disseminating cultural products with anti-socialist government contents,” “taking advantage of

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<sup>1</sup> Socialist Republic of Vietnam, [Constitution](#), 2013

democratic freedoms and rights to violate the interests of the state and social organizations,” “slandering and questioning the legitimacy of the people’s government,” and so on. The government often uses these vaguely defined crimes to restrict this freedom.’<sup>2</sup>

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## 7.2 Criminal code

### 7.2.1 Chapter 13 of the Criminal Code contains the following articles:

‘Article 109. Activities against the people's government

‘Any person who establishes or joins an organization that acts against the people's government shall face the following sentences:

1. The organizer, instigator, or person whose activities cause serious consequences shall face a penalty of 12 - 20 years' imprisonment, life imprisonment, or death;
2. Any accomplice shall face a penalty of 05 - 12 years' imprisonment;
3. Any person who makes preparation for the commitment of this criminal offence shall face a penalty of 01 - 05 years' imprisonment

‘Article 117. Making, storing, spreading information, materials, items for the purpose of opposing the State of Socialist Republic of Vietnam

1. Any person, for the purpose of opposing the State of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, commits any of the following acts shall face a penalty of 05 - 12 years' imprisonment:

- a) Making, storing, spreading information, materials, items whose that contains distorted information about the people's government;
- b) Making, storing, spreading information, materials, items whose that contains fabricated information to cause dismay among the people;
- b) Making, storing, spreading information, materials, items to cause psychological warfare.

2. An extremely serious case of this offence shall carry a penalty of 10 - 20 years' imprisonment.

3. Any person who makes preparation for the commitment of this criminal offence shall face a penalty of 01 - 05 years' imprisonment<sup>3</sup>.

### 7.2.2 Chapter 22 (Offences against administrative management order), Article 331 of the Criminal Code states:

‘Article 331. Abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, lawful rights and interests of organizations and/or citizens

1. Any person who abuses the freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and other democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, lawful rights and interests of organizations and/or citizens shall receive a warning or face a penalty of up to 03 years' community sentence or 06

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<sup>2</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>3</sup> Socialist Republic of Vietnam, [Criminal Code](#), 27 November 2015

- 36 months' imprisonment.

2. If the offence has a negative impact on social security, order, or safety, the offender shall face a penalty of 02 - 07 years' imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

- 7.2.3 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in their 2025 Country Information Report, based on their 'knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in Australia and overseas, and taking into account open-source reports' (DFAT 2025 report) noted that whilst the 2013 Constitution provides for freedom of opinion and speech, assembly and association:

'In practice, these rights are highly circumscribed, including through provisions of the Criminal Code (2015) that prohibit establishing or joining an organisation that acts against the government (Article 109); making, storing or spreading information for the purpose of opposing the state (Article 117); and abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state (Article 331). Like other national security provisions of the Criminal Code (2015), these carry prison sentences of up to 20 years. The death penalty may also apply in some instances. Human rights organisations said these provisions were used to silence dissenting voices. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that state tolerance for dissent had declined in recent years.'<sup>5</sup>

- 7.2.4 Human Rights Watch noted in their June 2025 submission to the European Union ahead of the EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue that 'Vietnam's criminal procedure code stipulates that the procurator of the People's Supreme Procuracy can hold in detention a person suspected of violating national security until the investigation is concluded (article 173(5)), and can restrict the detainee's access to legal counsel until after investigation is concluded (article 74).'<sup>6</sup>

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## 8. Political system

**NOTE: The maps in this section are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.**

### 8.1 Political structure

- 8.1.1 The DFAT 2025 report noted that:

'The National Congress is the CPV's largest decision-making body, with 1,600 delegates. It convenes every five years, most recently in January and February 2021. National Congress delegates elect the 200-member Central Committee, Vietnam's second-highest decision-making body, which meets biannually. The Central Committee, in turn, elects the Politburo, Vietnam's most powerful decision-making body.

'The General Secretary of the CPV sits at the top of Vietnam's political system: they head the Party, the Politburo and the Central Military Commission (the pre-eminent body for military policy). The General Secretary is chosen by the Central Committee. The State President (head of

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<sup>4</sup> Socialist Republic of Vietnam, [Criminal Code](#), 27 November 2015

<sup>5</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraph 3.66), 19 February 2025

<sup>6</sup> HRW, [HRW Submission to the EU ahead of the EU-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue](#), June 2025

state), Prime Minister (head of government) and Chair of the National Assembly (Vietnam's unicameral parliament) are powerful figures, albeit subordinate to the General Secretary as supreme leader (sitting second, third and fourth in Vietnam's political hierarchy, respectively).

'The 500-member National Assembly (Quoc Hoi) is the highest representative body of the Vietnamese people and Vietnam's chief lawmaking body. It has exclusive constitutional and legislative powers and a broad mandate to oversee government functions. The National Assembly formally appoints the State President, Prime Minister, Ministers and the Chief Justice (candidates are confirmed in advance by the CPV's Central Committee). National Assembly elections are held every five years by popular vote, most recently in May 2021. Candidates may self-nominate, including as independents. The candidate selection process includes three rounds of community consultations at both the national and provincial levels. All nominees must be vetted and approved by the Vietnam Fatherland Front, a CPV-affiliated organisation, before they can stand for election. Over 97 per cent of delegates to the current National Assembly are CPV members; its Chair is a member of the Politburo. Self-nominated delegates are not necessarily independent of the CPV in practice – those that are successful (a minority) tend to have party links of some sort. The National Assembly holds two annual sessions of 30 days each; extraordinary sessions may also be held (several of which were convened during the National Assembly's most recent term, mainly to discuss personnel matters).

'Administratively, Vietnam is organised into 58 provinces and five centrally run cities (Can Tho, Da Nang, Hanoi, Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City) grouped into eight regions (Northwest, Northeast, Red River Delta, North Central, South Central Coast, Central Highlands, Southeast and the Mekong River Delta). Centrally run cities are administered by the national government; they are equal in status to provinces. Provinces and centrally run cities are divided into districts (over 700) and communes (around 11,000). Local government consists of People's Councils and People's Committees. People's Councils represent the authority of the state at the provincial level; its members (councillors) are popularly elected. Like the National Assembly, candidates for People's Councils must be approved by the CPV. Elections are held every five years. Councillors, in turn, appoint and oversee People's Committees, which carry out administrative duties and implement state policies at the provincial, district and commune levels.<sup>7</sup>

#### 8.1.2 The below map shows the provinces of Vietnam<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 2.72- 2.75), 19 February 2025

<sup>8</sup> Asia photos, [Vietnam maps](#), no date





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## 8.2 Political parties

- 8.2.1 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that: ‘The Communist Party of Vietnam does not allow any opposition parties.’<sup>9</sup>
- 8.2.2 Freedom House, in their annual report Freedom on the Net 2024, covering the reporting period of June 2023 to May 2024, noted that: ‘Vietnam is a one-party state, dominated for decades by the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). Although some independent candidates are technically allowed to run in legislative elections, most are banned in practice.’<sup>10</sup>
- 8.2.3 The DFAT 2025 report noted that:
- ‘The CPV is the sole legal political entity in Vietnam – no other political entity can operate, and association with a political entity other than the CPV is prohibited. Political expression that is critical of government policy or

<sup>9</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

questions the legitimacy of the CPV is not tolerated.

‘Vietnam is a one-party state ruled by the CPV. Other political parties are prohibited. The 2013 Constitution designates the CPV as ‘the leading force of the state and society’. CPV members hold all senior government and military positions.’<sup>11</sup>

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### 8.3 Elections

8.3.1 The DFAT 2025 report noted: ‘Citizens have the right to vote from the age of 18. Voting for National Assembly and People’s Council elections is not compulsory, although social pressure to vote at National Assembly elections is high, making it essentially mandatory in practice. The National Election Council reported voter turnout of 99.6 per cent at the last election for National Assembly (May 2021).’<sup>12</sup>

8.3.2 The 88 Project, a human rights advocacy group<sup>13</sup>, report to the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR) fourth periodic review of Vietnam (The 88 Project report), dated 26 May 2025 noted that:

‘In 2016 and 2021, a number of people nominated themselves to run as candidates independent of the communist party in the national assembly elections. Vietnamese law ostensibly permits any citizen over 21 years old to run for the national assembly. In practice, however, independent candidates were harassed and threatened by state agents, and disqualified from running in the elections in rigged CPV-controlled preselection processes. Several were even arrested, including Le Trong Hung, who was sentenced to five years in prison after he nominated himself to run in 2021.’<sup>14</sup>

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## 9. Illegal political parties

### 9.1 Groups promoting democracy and human rights

9.1.1 The Vietnam Human Rights Network, a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in the USA<sup>15</sup>, noted in their 2022-2023 report that:

‘... organizations promoting democracy and human rights, such as Bloc 8406, the People’s Action Party, the Democratic Party of Vietnam, the Vietnam Progress Party, the Populist Party, the High Tide of Humanism Movement, the Committee for Human Rights, the United Workers-Farmers Association, Viet Labor Movement, the Vietnamese Political and Religious Prisoners Friendship Association, the Patriotic Youth, the Vietnam Path Movement, Vietnam Blogger Network, the Brotherhood For Democracy, the Constitution Group, the Vietnam National Self-Determination Coalition, Vietnamese Women for Human Rights, and the Independent Journalists Association continued to be banned and persecuted.’<sup>16</sup>

9.1.2 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that:

‘Individuals and groups advocating for democratization regardless of their

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<sup>11</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 2.67 & 2.71), 19 February 2025

<sup>12</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 2.76), 19 February 2025

<sup>13</sup> The 88 Project, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>14</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN Human...](#), 26 May 2025

<sup>15</sup> VHRN, [about us](#), no date

<sup>16</sup> VHRN, [Report on Human Rights in Vietnam 2022-2023](#), 18 November 2023



background are generally defined as “anti-party and anti (socialist) regime.” They are subjected to criminal charges under the Penal Code. Party members and ex-government officials who vow to promote democracy are labeled as having become “decadent in [socialist] ideology, self-evolved and self-transformed.” They are marginalized from party activities, silenced, and expelled, as was the case of Chu Hao, a former vice minister of science and technology.

‘... Public participation in politics and decision-making processes remains negligible given that the government wants to control all aspects of society. The party-state maintains control over those organizations designed to represent civil society interests. For instance, CSOs that receive foreign support and are involved in activities relating to “politically sensitive” topics, such as legislation and legal issues, human rights, democracy and political reform, are legally required to seek approval from the prime minister.’<sup>17</sup>

‘In the last year, the space for even quasi-independent civil society activities has narrowed. The CPV’s political leadership has rejected civil society consultations and effectively excluded non-party-state representatives from the political process.’<sup>18</sup>

- 9.1.3 Radio Free Asia reported in March 2025 that police had arrested democracy activists for an alleged anti-government plot. The article noted:

‘Quach Gia Khang from Dong Nai province was charged on Tuesday [18 March 2025] with “conducting activities aimed at overthrowing the people’s administration” under Article 109 of the Criminal Code, police said. Khang was a member of the France-based Assembly for Democracy and Pluralism, police said. They accused him of using Facebook, Viber and other social media to promote the group’s agenda. Khang is the second member of the group to be arrested in six months.

‘The assembly was founded by Nguyen Gia Kieng, a former official in the Republic of Vietnam – also known as South Vietnam – the losing side in the 1955-1975 Vietnam War. The group advocates “fighting for democracy through non-violent means in the spirit of national reconciliation.” Campaigning for a multi-party system is against the law in communist Vietnam.’<sup>19</sup>

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## 9.2 The Viet Tan

- 9.2.1 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘The Viet Tan (‘Vietnam Reform Party’) is a diaspora organisation promoting multi-party democracy in Vietnam. The Viet Tan is headquartered in the United States. According to its official website, the Viet Tan is organised into local chapters and receives strategic direction from a Central Committee led by the group’s chair, currently Ly Thai Hung, an American national. The Viet Tan has origins in the National United Front for the Freedom of Vietnam, which comprised former South Vietnamese leaders, and reinvented itself as a nonviolent movement in 2004. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that the CPV considered the Viet Tan a threat to its legitimacy and rule.

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<sup>17</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>18</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>19</sup> RFA, [Vietnam police arrest democracy activist for alleged anti-government plot](#), 20 March 2025

‘The Viet Tan was proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the Government of Vietnam in October 2016. As a proscribed entity, it is outlawed in Vietnam and does not have an open presence there. The MPS considers anybody who participates in the Viet Tan or who lures or incites others to participate in the Viet Tan; sponsors or receives sponsorship from the Viet Tan; attends training courses organised by the Viet Tan; or places themselves at the Viet Tan’s direction to be an accomplice and sponsor of terrorism. In-country sources said that, given its terrorist designation, anybody suspected of belonging to the Viet Tan would face a high risk of arrest. According to in-country sources, a Vietnamese citizen abroad with an established pattern of behaviour posting online material supportive of the Viet Tan would likely be questioned on return, should their online activity become known to the authorities.

‘The Viet Tan is an extremely sensitive topic in Vietnam and there are no known members inside the country (all known members are based abroad). The Viet Tan’s chair and general secretary are based in the United States, with representatives in several other countries, including Australia. ... At the time of publication, DFAT was unable to obtain authoritative information on the Viet Tan’s recruitment processes and how membership could be obtained.’<sup>20</sup>

- 9.2.2 The US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) security report on Vietnam published in March 2025 noted that: ‘The Vietnamese government has also designated California-based pro-democracy group Việt Tân as a terrorist organization, accusing the group of training members to sneak into Vietnam to organize protests and instigate violence. Among others, authorities in 2019 arrested a Vietnam-born, Australian citizen for his work with the group, convicting him of working to “fund terrorist operations.”’<sup>21</sup>
- 9.2.3 The 88 Project produced a database of what it self-terms ‘persecuted activists’ in Vietnam. These include political prisoners and those that the 88 Project define as ‘activists at risk’. ‘Activists at risk’ is defined by the 88 Project as those not detained but who have suffered from harassment including, physical attacks, administrative fines, forced eviction and passport denials. It also includes those who have been released from detention but remain under surveillance. According to their website the list is produced using first-hand information, articles confirming arrests/charges/sentences from state-owned media, information from independent media/ Vietnamese human rights organizations/ social media pages of activists in Vietnam, information from international media and cross checking with existing databases of political prisoners<sup>22</sup>.
- 9.2.4 At the time of writing in July 2025, the 88 Project listed the details of 1 activist who was affiliated with the Viet Tan. Chau Van Kham, an Australian citizen of Vietnamese descent was a member of the Viet Tan and was arrested in Vietnam in 2019 and sentenced to 12 years for terrorism charges. He was released in July 2023 and is now in exile<sup>23</sup>.

See also [Monitoring of the diaspora](#)

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<sup>20</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.82-3.84), 19 February 2025

<sup>21</sup> US OSAC, [Vietnam Country Security Report](#), 4 March 2025

<sup>22</sup> The 88 Project, [Database- FAQ](#), no date

<sup>23</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 21 July 2025

### 9.3 Provisional National Government of Vietnam

- 9.3.1 The Provisional National Government of Vietnam is based in the US and according to Radio Free Asia ‘an independent news site providing ‘uncensored and accurate local news to a weekly audience of nearly 60 million who lack access to a free press or live in media environments vulnerable to authoritarian disinformation’<sup>24</sup>, was founded in 1991 by soldiers and refugees that had been loyal to the South Vietnamese government prior to the country’s unification under communist rule in 1975.’<sup>25</sup>
- 9.3.2 In 2018 the Ministry of Public Security announced that the Provisional National Government of Vietnam was a terrorist group<sup>26</sup>.
- 9.3.3 Radio Free Asia reported that: ‘More than 60 people in Vietnam have been given long prison sentences for being members of the so-called “Provisional National Government of Vietnam,” since it was classified as a terrorist organization by the Ministry of Public Security in 2018.’<sup>27</sup>
- 9.3.4 There was no further information in the sources consulted regarding the Provisional National Government of Vietnam (see [Bibliography](#)).

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### 9.4 Brotherhood for democracy

- 9.4.1 Front Line Defenders, an international human rights organisation with the aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk<sup>28</sup>, noted that:
- ‘The Brotherhood for Democracy was founded in 2013 as a loose association of activists and human rights defenders formerly imprisoned for their political beliefs. The Brotherhood aims to support the development of a just society in Vietnam as well as to defend the human rights standards established in Vietnam’s constitution and international human rights conventions. Prior to a 2017 crackdown by Vietnamese authorities on the Brotherhood, the group provided frequent trainings on human rights topics to Vietnamese citizens. Members also assist victims of rights infringement by Vietnamese authorities and private businesses in advocacy efforts and filing of legal cases. In April 2018, seven members of the Brotherhood for Democracy were found guilty of “carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people’s administration” and given lengthy prison sentences.’<sup>29</sup>
- 9.4.2 The 88 Project noted that:
- ‘The Brotherhood for Democracy has been one of the most persecuted political groups in Vietnam, beginning in 2015. Founded in 2013 as an association of activists and human rights defenders formerly imprisoned for their political beliefs, the group’s objective is to provide training on human rights topics and assist victims of rights infringement by Vietnamese authorities. Until now, ten leading members of Brotherhood for Democracy have received lengthy sentences for practicing basic rights recognized by

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<sup>24</sup> RFA, [About Radio Free Asia](#), no date

<sup>25</sup> RFA, [Vietnam’s ‘Provisional National Government’ offers empty promises, lawyers...](#), 17 April 2024

<sup>26</sup> Vietnamnet Global, [“Provisional National Government of Vietnam” is a terrorist...](#), 31 January 2018

<sup>27</sup> RFA, [Vietnam’s ‘Provisional National Government’ offers empty promises, lawyers...](#), 17 April 2024

<sup>28</sup> Front Line Defenders, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>29</sup> Front Line Defenders, [Brotherhood for Democracy](#), no date

the Vietnamese Constitution. Charges against them include advocating for the establishment of a free market economy and a democratic government, calling on international organizations to speak out against human rights violations, and giving legal support to dispossessed farmers and victims of the Formosa pollution disaster.<sup>30</sup>

- 9.4.3 At the time of writing in July 2025, the 88 Project listed the details of 17 activists who are affiliated with the Brotherhood for Democracy. 2 were listed as ‘at risk’, 4 were listed as ‘released- at risk’, 2 were listed as ‘released-exiled’. The remaining 9 were listed as currently detained, although the details of one show he was released in September 2024<sup>31</sup>.

See also Traditional media and journalists - [State treatment](#)

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## 10. Protesters and human rights activists

### 10.1 Ability to protest

- 10.1.1 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that:

‘Public gatherings, especially those concerning “sensitive” topics such as human rights, democracy and civil society, permitted by the authorities are closely monitored by public security (police). In the past, several public gatherings and demonstrations were held to protest China’s aggressive actions in the East Sea (South China Sea). In the past year, a group involved in the clean-up of plastics was suppressed. Similar to the situation with the bill on associations, the enactment of a law on demonstrations is continuously delayed. Without a law on demonstrations, the government has applied arbitrarily criminal rules to suppress the assembly rights of the citizens. Some of the multinational or bilateral free trade agreements that Vietnam has joined and signed with other countries empower workers to strike or encourage the establishment of independent trade unions. Public gatherings and demonstrations without permission are still banned and dissolved.’<sup>32</sup>

- 10.1.2 The DFAT 2025 report stated that: ‘The 2013 Constitution provides a right to assemble and hold demonstrations; however, this right is severely restricted in practice. ... Permission to stage a protest must be sought from authorities.’<sup>33</sup>

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### 10.2 Protests on ‘sensitive issues’

- 10.2.1 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘Public protests that are perceived to challenge the party or government are not tolerated, even where of a peaceful nature. Protests outside of state agencies and public buildings, and protests that are deemed to interfere with the activities of the CPV, are prohibited under Decree 38 (2005). ... Where public protests have occurred, most have related to local issues (usually land issues) and have been small in scale. Authorities or their proxies may use force when responding to unauthorised protest activity, and protesters may

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<sup>30</sup> 88 Project, [Incident: Crackdown on Brotherhood for Democracy since 2015](#), no date

<sup>31</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 21 July 2025

<sup>32</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>33</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.87), 19 February 2025

have financial penalties or prison sentences imposed on them.

‘Peaceful protests have occurred in recent years in relation to perceived aggression by China in the South China Sea (where China’s territorial claims overlap with Vietnam’s) and against proposed legal revisions to discourage workers from withdrawing their social insurance (aged pension) early. Large-scale protests occurred in 2016 following a Taiwanese-owned steel factory in central Vietnam illegally discharging toxic industrial waste into the ocean, resulting in water pollution and the mass death of fish and other aquatic creatures (also known as the Formosa disaster). The Formosa disaster protests occurred primarily in the affected provinces of Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue but also elsewhere, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and some activists were arrested. Large-scale protests are generally rare.’<sup>34</sup>

- 10.2.2 The US OSAC security report noted: ‘The government places heavy controls on political protests and public demonstrations, making civil unrest relatively uncommon. Small-scale, peaceful demonstrations have occurred, often due to territorial disputes between Vietnam and the People’s Republic of China (PRC); large-scale demonstrations are rare. ... Local authorities monitor protests in Vietnam heavily.’<sup>35</sup>

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### 10.3 Land disputes

- 10.3.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the section on [Protests on ‘sensitive issues’](#). Reference should also be made to the country policy and information note on [Vietnam: Ethnic and religious minority groups](#) where the land dispute is related to religious/ethnic groups.

- 10.3.2 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that:

‘There have occasionally been protests by ethnic, religious or civil groups relating to land ownership in different regions of the country, but they were quickly and easily suppressed by the CPV and its forces.

‘... Widespread complaints persist of inadequate or delayed compensation, officials’ corruption, and a general lack of transparency and due process in the government’s process of confiscating land and displacing citizens to make way for infrastructure projects. In 2022, according to a report by the government’s general inspectorate, complaints relating to land disputes accounted for 64.6% of the total number of complaints received and handled by this body. Indeed, numerous reports exist of clashes between local residents and authorities at land expropriation sites. Some coercive land seizures have resulted in violence and injuries to both state officials and villagers, as occurred in Dong Tam Commune (a suburb of Hanoi), Thua Thien Hue Province (a central province) and other locations across the country. In January 2020, a deadly clash transpired between Dong Tam villagers and Hanoi riot police, resulting in the fatalities of three police officers and an 80-year-old villager.’<sup>36</sup>

- 10.3.3 The DFAT 2025 report stated that: ‘Protests about state requisition of land occur occasionally ... Like other forms of unauthorised public protest,

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<sup>34</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.87- 3.88), 19 February 2025

<sup>35</sup> US OSAC, [Vietnam Country Security Report](#), 4 March 2025

<sup>36</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024



protests against land seizures can be met with force. There have been instances of police and plain clothed individuals using batons and other instruments to disperse protesters, including, according to Radio Free Asia, in Thanh Hoa Province in February 2023 (16 people were arrested but subsequently released).<sup>37</sup>

#### 10.3.4 The US OSAC security report noted:

‘The U.S. Embassy Hanoi has been the target of pickets by land reform activists as recent as summer 2024. These protests were often over in 15 minutes and the police removed the protestors away quickly. Protests over land use are not uncommon throughout the country. While ownership of all land is technically held by the state, land confiscations have become a flashpoint, with residents accusing the government ignoring the interests of small landholders in favor of lucrative real estate or industrial developments.’<sup>38</sup>

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### 10.4 Ethnic and religious groups

- 10.4.1 Members of ethnic and religious groups may be perceived as being in opposition to the state and where this is the case decision makers should also refer to the relevant country policy and information notes on [Vietnam: Ethnic and religious minority groups](#) and [Vietnam: Hoa Hao Buddhism](#).

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### 10.5 State treatment

- 10.5.1 In July 2024 Radio Free Asia reported that a former political prisoner, Huynh Thuc Vy, had been denied a passport for “national security reasons”. According to Radio Free Asia, Thuc Vy ‘is a co-founder of Vietnam Women for Human Rights and the author of many articles on democracy and human rights. She was sentenced to 33 months in prison for “insulting the national flag” in November 2018, but released in June [2024], three months early.’<sup>39</sup>

- 10.5.2 The DFAT 2025 report noted that:

‘In-country sources reported in October 2023 that broad and vague provisions of the Criminal Code (2015) relating to national security were frequently used to arrest, detain and convict dissenting voices and shut down activism deemed counter to the party’s and government’s interests. Relevant provisions of the Criminal Code (2015) include: Article 109 (activities against the people’s government); Article 116 (undermining national unity and solidarity); Article 117 (spreading anti-state propaganda); Article 118 (disrupting security); Article 318 (disturbing public order); and Article 331 (abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state). National security provisions of the Criminal Code (2015) provide for prison sentences of between five and 20 years, with the death penalty applying in some instances. In-country sources said people who criticised state policies and/or advocated for human rights, political plurality, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion or belief attracted charges under these provisions. DFAT understands Criminal Code (2015) articles 109, 117

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<sup>37</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.89- 3.90), 19 February 2025

<sup>38</sup> US OSAC, [Vietnam Country Security Report](#), 4 March 2025

<sup>39</sup> Radio Free Asia, [Former political prisoner denied passport by Vietnamese authorities](#), 14 July 2024

and 331 are most commonly used against people who meet this profile.

‘... On their release, former prisoners of conscience have been subjected to supervised probation (quan che), a secondary form of punishment which allows the state to place national security offenders under the supervision of a local authority for between one- and five-years following release.

According to in-country sources, as of October 2023, former prisoners of conscience subjected to quan che faced close surveillance and movement restrictions (they must live and work within a defined area) and were required to report regularly to the police. Those under quan che are also ineligible to apply for state positions and serve in the military.

‘In-country sources reported in October 2023 that former prisoners of conscience were monitored closely after completing their prison sentences and any supervised probation, including their homes, communications and online activities, and were not allowed to meet foreigners. Former prisoners of conscience who have engaged in activity considered anti-state, including online posts, have been summoned for police questioning and faced increased risk of re-arrest and prosecution. According to in-country sources, former prisoners of conscience had experienced delays when applying for official documentation and may be prevented from travelling abroad. In-country sources said the families of prisoners of conscience were also subjected to physical and electronic state surveillance, including of their communications, and experienced societal discrimination. For example, police had pressured landlords to evict or refuse housing to families of prisoners of conscience. In-country sources also said the children of prisoners of conscience had been deliberately neglected by teachers and fellow pupils in schools.

‘... Human rights is a sensitive topic in Vietnam. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that people who defend and advocate for human rights in a way that is perceived to challenge the legitimacy of the CPV and government, and their families, were routinely harassed, including state monitoring of online and offline activities, regular police questioning, intimidation and reprisals. According to in-country sources, some human rights defenders had been harassed outside of their homes by unknown individuals; been evicted from their rental properties or had rental applications rejected by landlords (reportedly in response to police pressure); experienced difficulty enrolling their children in school and obtaining official documentation; subjected to arbitrary tax investigations and checks on their household registration; and had credit cards locked, bank accounts frozen and social media accounts hacked. In-country sources said the police were known to install closed-circuit television cameras in the vicinity of human rights defenders’ homes, to surveil movements in and out of their homes. According to in-country sources, it was common for human rights defenders and others who met foreign diplomats to be visited at their homes or “invited for tea” (a euphemism for being summoned to a police station) by MPS officers and asked to report on what was discussed, and the line of questioning they received, during the meeting. Violence was typically not used in such scenarios.

‘Human rights defenders have also had their movements blocked during events deemed sensitive to the party and government (e.g. visits by foreign dignitaries, elections, major anniversaries) or when planning to meet

members of the international community. ... Human rights defenders are generally free to move around Vietnam, albeit while monitored; however, they may be prevented from travelling abroad for human rights-related meetings (for example, by having passports refused or being prevented from boarding flights). In-country sources reported in October 2023 that human rights defenders who did travel abroad to participate in human rights-related meetings were typically questioned by police on their return to Vietnam.

‘Human rights defenders who have engaged with UN human rights mechanisms, including treaty review bodies and special procedures mandate holders, have experienced state-sponsored intimidation and harassment. In-country sources confirmed this, as did the UN Secretary-General’s 2023 and 2024 global reports on reprisals against people cooperating with UN human rights mechanisms and representatives. DFAT understands some activists were placed under surveillance during the November 2023 visit to Vietnam of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development. According to in-country sources, people who planned to engage with UN human rights mechanisms were often questioned in advance by authorities, pressured not to engage or experienced ‘obstacles’ impeding their journey to the engagement.

‘Human rights lawyers face state pressure not to defend certain clients, particularly defendants in politically sensitive cases. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that several prominent human rights lawyers had chosen to emigrate (some were reportedly granted protection in third countries) because of fears about their safety. There have also been instances in recent years of human rights lawyers being prosecuted on national security grounds.’<sup>40</sup>

- 10.5.3 Human Rights Watch claimed in their report, “We’ll All Be Arrested Soon” Abusive Prosecutions under Vietnam’s “Infringing on State Interests” Law, dated April 2025 that between January 2018 and February 2025, 124 people have been convicted and sentenced to prison under article 331 of the penal code. Their alleged crimes included: expressing critical views of the government, taking part in protests, participating in religious groups not approved by the authorities, advocating for Indigenous rights, and expressing grievances against local authorities<sup>41</sup>. Human Rights Watch noted that their list is incomplete as it only includes the details of those that they have been able to document<sup>42</sup>.
- 10.5.4 The same report noted that in the past those arrested under article 331 were often bloggers or human rights activists but that now: ‘... the authorities have enlarged the scope and application of article 331 so that it reaches further into society, beyond human rights and democracy dissidents (most of whom are now in prison) to all those who voice any grievance with state or local Communist Party and government officials. As a result, people with no appreciable public profile as activists face arrest and severe prison sentences even for criticizing low-level officials.’<sup>43</sup> Human Rights Watch did not provide examples of activists with no appreciable public profile who have faced arrest of severe prison sentences.

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<sup>40</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.72, 3.74- 75, 3.77- 80), 19 February 2025

<sup>41</sup> HRW, [“We’ll All Be Arrested Soon”: Abusive Prosecutions under Vietnam’s....](#) 21 April 2025

<sup>42</sup> HRW, [“We’ll All Be Arrested Soon”: Abusive Prosecutions under Vietnam’s....](#) 21 April 2025

<sup>43</sup> HRW, [“We’ll All Be Arrested Soon”: Abusive Prosecutions under Vietnam’s....](#) 21 April 2025



- 10.5.5 The same sources noted in their submission to the European Union ahead of the EU-Vietnam human rights dialogue that:
- ‘Human Rights Watch recently documented that the Vietnamese authorities are increasingly using a vague, overbroad, and abusive provision of the penal code, article 331, which prohibits the “abuse of democratic freedoms,” both to silence prominent activists and to retaliate against ordinary people who complain about poor services, corruption, or police abuse.
- ‘... those who are suspected of violating national security offenses are regularly held in police custody without access to a lawyer for as long as the investigating officials deem appropriate.’<sup>44</sup>
- 10.5.6 The 88 Project report noted that:
- ‘... instead of ensuring the public had a voice in key decisions about the transition, the government has effectively criminalized activism on energy policy by imprisoning the leaders of the country’s climate change movement and criminalizing all efforts to influence policymaking and monitor the country’s compliance with international agreements, even from government insiders. And not only has the public been shut out of the decision-making process, but the governments involved in the transition have acknowledged that there is no mechanism for the public to participate in the country’s energy transition. Moreover, rather than working with climate activists, Vietnam has imprisoned the leadership of the climate change movement, effectively criminalizing citizen climate action. Since 2021, Nguy Thi Khanh, Dang Dinh Bach, Mai Phan Loi, Bach Hung Duong, and Hoang Thi Minh Hong were all imprisoned on false tax evasion charges. In addition, Ngo Thi To Nhien, the head of an energy policy think tank, was imprisoned for allegedly misappropriating government documents. Due to government repression, the nascent climate change movement that once existed has been quashed.’<sup>45</sup>
- 10.5.7 The US State Departments 2024 Country report on Human Rights Practices published on 12 August 2025, in a new format containing less detailed information than previous years, noted:
- ‘The government restricted speech that criticized individual government leaders or the party, promoted political pluralism or multiparty democracy, or questioned policies on sensitive matters such as human rights, religious freedom, sovereignty disputes with the People’s Republic of China, or coercive land seizure. Authorities regularly questioned, imposed fines, and prosecuted individuals for speech deemed unacceptable.
- ‘... The government prohibited any public criticism of the CPV and state policy, including by independent scientific and technical organizations, even when the criticism was presented to a purely academic audience. The government exerted influence over exhibits, music, and other cultural activities by requiring numerous authorizations.’<sup>46</sup>
- 10.5.8 The [88 Project database](#) contains details of what it self-terms “persecuted activists” in Vietnam. These include political prisoners and those that the 88 Project define as “activists at risk”. Political prisoners are defined by the 88

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<sup>44</sup> HRW, [HRW Submission to the EU ahead of the EU-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue](#), June 2025

<sup>45</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN Human...](#), 26 May 2025

<sup>46</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam](#), 12 August 2025

Project as those who have: ‘been jailed or had their freedom restricted because of their political or religious beliefs or activities’.<sup>47</sup> See [About the country information](#) for an explanation on defining activists in different sources.

See also [Detention](#)

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## 11. Traditional media and journalists

### 11.1 Law on traditional media and journalists

- 11.1.1 The DFAT 2025 report noted that: ‘The 2013 Constitution grants citizens the right to freedom of the press and of access to information; however, in practice, these rights are highly restricted. The media is closely controlled and censored by the state.’<sup>48</sup>
- 11.1.2 Reporters Without Borders ranked Vietnam 173 out of 180 countries in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index<sup>49</sup> (where the lower the ranking the less free the press are<sup>50</sup>). The ranking has improved slightly from 2024 where they were ranked in 174 and 2023 where they were ranked in 178 out of 180 countries<sup>51</sup>.
- 11.1.3 Amnesty International’s annual report on human rights published in April 2025 noted that: ‘In September [2024], Viet Nam refused to adopt numerous recommendations linked to freedom of expression issued by the UN’s [Universal Periodic Review] UPR procedure. According to Amnesty International’s records, at least 45 journalists, human rights defenders and citizens have been arrested, often on spurious charges, since April 2023. The situation for civil society worsened amid a more general political tightening.’<sup>52</sup>
- 11.1.4 The USSD 2024 report noted that:

‘The constitution and law provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media; however, the government did not respect these rights, and some laws specifically encroached on freedom of expression. The government also continued to use broad national security and antidefamation provisions in the law to restrict freedom of expression. Such provisions established crimes such as “sabotaging the infrastructure of socialism,” “sowing divisions between religious and nonreligious people,” and “propagandizing against the state” as serious offenses against national security. The law also expressly forbade “taking advantage of democratic freedoms and rights to violate the interests of the state or lawful rights and interests of organizations or individuals.”’<sup>53</sup>

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### 11.2 Media outlets

- 11.2.1 The DFAT 2025 report noted that:

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<sup>47</sup> The 88 Project, [Database- FAQ’s](#), 21 July 2025

<sup>48</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.92), 19 February 2025

<sup>49</sup> RSF, [2025 Index](#), 2 May 2025

<sup>50</sup> RSF, [Methodology used for compiling the World Press Freedom Index 2025](#), no date

<sup>51</sup> RSF, [2024 Index](#) [2023 Index](#), 2024 and 2023

<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#), 29 April 2025

<sup>53</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam](#), 12 August 2025

‘Nearly all media are state-affiliated. Financially independent, theoretically private media exist, although are subject to the same censorship as state media and exercise caution – including self-censorship – in their reporting.

‘... CPV membership is not a prerequisite for journalists seeking employment in state-affiliated media. However, editors-in-chief must be CPV members and be proficient in Marxist-Leninist political theory; training in the latter is mandatory. While state media dominate the traditional media landscape, in-country sources reported in October 2023 that a growing proportion of the population received their news from social media, particularly Facebook, rather than television, print or radio. Online media operators and social media platforms, like those offline, are closely monitored.’<sup>54</sup>

- 11.2.2 The USSD report 2024 noted: ‘Although the law allowed organizations to run their own media outlets, government- and CPV-controlled mass media organizations exercised legal authority over all major print, broadcast, online, and electronic media, primarily through the Ministry of Information and Communications under the overall guidance of the CPV Information and Education Commission.’<sup>55</sup>

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### 11.3 State treatment

- 11.3.1 The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted that in 2024 there were 16 journalists recorded as being detained. The sentences ranged from 2.5 years to 15 years in prison<sup>56</sup>.
- 11.3.2 At the time of writing in July 2025 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) noted that there are 38 journalists detained, although this number includes those recorded as bloggers<sup>57</sup>.
- 11.3.3 PEN America, who ‘defend writers, artists, and journalists and protect free expression worldwide’<sup>58</sup>, delivered an oral statement at the 4<sup>th</sup> UN UPR Cycle pre-session in Geneva on 13 February 2024. The statement noted:
- ‘Authorities have continued to arrest, charge, and imprison writers, journalists and activists for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Included among those detained are 18 writers and 37 journalists. Many were arrested for making critical statements against the government under the guise of violating Article 117 and 331 of the 2015 Penal Code. Vietnam’s 2018 Cybersecurity Law, Decree 53, and draft Decree 72’s mandates on local data storage and government control over online content also raises concerns for free expression and privacy. Despite “noting” several recommendations on the 2015 Penal Code and Cybersecurity Law, Vietnam has failed to make any substantive changes.’<sup>59</sup>
- 11.3.4 The Freedom on the Net 2024 report noted that: ‘The government exercises a high degree of control over content published online. All content produced by newspapers and online news outlets must pass through in-house censorship before publication. The government also actively seeks to

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<sup>54</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.92 & 3.94), 19 February 2025

<sup>55</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam](#), 12 August 2025

<sup>56</sup> CPJ, [Explore CPJ's database of attacks on the press](#), updated 1 December 2024

<sup>57</sup> RSF, [Index](#), 2025

<sup>58</sup> PEN America, [About PEN America](#), no date

<sup>59</sup> PEN America, [Advocating for Free Expression at the UN: Recommendations ...](#), 13 February 2024

manipulate public opinion online.’<sup>60</sup>

11.3.5 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘According to in-country sources, speaking in October 2023, the CPV, through its Central Propaganda and Education Commission, directed media in relation to what they could report on; those that failed to comply could have their licences withdrawn. Topics most likely to attract censorship include human rights, political dissent, sovereignty disputes with China and – the Blazing Furnace notwithstanding – corruption involving high-level political figures. Criticism of the state and political leadership is a red line; reporting of this nature, to the extent that it exists, is largely online, by independent journalists and bloggers, many of whom are based outside Vietnam.

‘... Journalists face arrest, prosecution and imprisonment under the same national security provisions of the Criminal Code (2015) used against activists. ... DFAT is aware of multiple examples of independent journalists, including bloggers, being prosecuted on national security grounds for their reporting since 2021, mostly on the grounds of spreading anti-state propaganda and abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state (prison sentences ranged from two to 15 years).’<sup>61</sup>

11.3.6 PEN America noted in Freedom to Write Index 2024 that Vietnam was the third largest jailers of writers in 2024. The report went on to note: ‘The Vietnamese government not only imprisons and threatens writers, but also suppresses everyday free expression by monopolizing traditional media like radio, television, and newspapers. Additionally, Vietnam controls the book industry by tightly controlling publishing, requiring pre-approval for content, censoring dissenting voices, and limiting access to independent or foreign publications.’<sup>62</sup>

11.3.7 The USSD 2024 report noted:

‘Independent journalists faced restrictions on freedom of movement and other forms of harassment if they reported on sensitive topics. The government also monitored journalists’ meetings and communications. The government punished journalists for failing to self-censor, including by revoking journalists’ press credentials.

‘... The government could fine journalists and newspapers for failing to cite their sources of information or for using “documents and materials from organizations and personal letters and materials from individuals, without clearly stating the sources of such information.” The law allowed the government to punish publishers if they published false information or content the government deemed objectionable. The law enabled the Ministry of Information and Communications and provincial information and communications authorities to fine media outlets and reporters for covering news beyond their approved mandate, particularly political and foreign affairs news. In addition to fines, authorities could also suspend the operation of media outlets for up to 12 months.

‘... Authorities frequently intervened directly with media to dictate or censor a story and permitted media outlets to report only on predetermined topics.

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<sup>60</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>61</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.93 & 3.95), 19 February 2025

<sup>62</sup> PEN America, [Freedom to Write Index 2024](#), 24 April 2025

Pervasive self-censorship, including among independent journalists and bloggers, due to the threat of dismissal and possible arrest, resulted in effective party and government control of most media content.

‘Media independent of government authority operated on a limited basis online, primarily via blogs and social media, but independent journalists faced government harassment.

‘... There were reports of local business leaders pressuring state media outlets and journalists to remove negative media reports regarding them and their businesses. There were reports of business owners or unidentified assailants assumed to be working for businesses assaulting reporters and preventing them from doing their jobs. In April, for example, unidentified assailants beat and injured reporters of the major online newspaper *VnExpress* and National Television VTV who were investigating a fire in Hanoi.’<sup>63</sup>

- 11.3.8 At the time of writing in July 2025, the 88 Project listed the details of 34 journalists. 8 were listed as ‘at risk’, 5 were ‘likely released- at risk’, 1 was sentenced to probation, 6 were listed as ‘released- at risk’, 1 was listed as ‘released- exiled’. 13 were sentenced to prison, with two of those listed arrested for their membership of the Brotherhood for Democracy<sup>64</sup>. (See also [Brotherhood for democracy](#))
- 11.3.9 The PEN America Writers at Risk database provides a list of writers, journalists, academics and public intellectuals that are under threat. PEN America includes the following ‘writers’ in their database- literary writers, poets, dramatists, singer/songwriters, scholars, creative artists, editors, translators, publishers, journalists and online commentators. The database is not exhaustive as there may be people who are not known about or cases where there is limited reporting. People may also appear under more than one category of ‘writer’. The database includes details of those that are imprisoned, released, in exile, deceased, those that are facing continued harassment and cases of recorded harassment. Those that are recorded as imprisoned on the PEN America list must have spent at least 48 hours behind bars in a single instance of detention between 1 January and 31 December 2024. Harassment is defined by PEN America as instances where a writer has faced intimidation in the last 2 years which may include brief periods of detention, repeated arrests and judicial harassment. Recorded harassment is where the person is no longer facing harassment and continued harassment is where the person is still facing instances of intimidation. A more detailed breakdown of each category can be found in their methodology<sup>65</sup>.
- 11.3.10 At the time of writing in July 2025 PEN America records the details of 21 journalists. 11 journalists are recorded as in prison, 5 are recorded as displaced or in exile, 4 released and 1 case of recorded harassment<sup>66</sup>.
- 11.3.11 See [Annex A: Table on detained journalists, bloggers and writers](#) for more details of those recorded as detained on the 88 Project database and the PEN America database.

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<sup>63</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Vietnam](#), 12 August 2025

<sup>64</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 21 July 2025

<sup>65</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Project Public Methodology](#), no date

<sup>66</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date



## 12. Internet, social media and bloggers

### 12.1 Law(s) on internet, social media and bloggers

#### 12.1.1 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that:

‘Up until 2018, the internet appeared to provide a public space for citizens to express dissident political and social views in the context of a party-state where no independent media is allowed. Freedom of expression has been increasingly restricted since June 2018 when the National Assembly adopted the law on cybersecurity. The law went into effect on January 1, 2019. Facebook, which is easily the biggest platform, is subject to continuous, comprehensive monitoring by a team of internet monitors believed to number in the thousands. Internet users in Vietnam are now more cautious in posting their expressions online than they were just a few years ago. Internet users can be, and are, charged with various violations.’<sup>67</sup>

#### 12.1.2 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘The Law on Cybersecurity (2018) requires technology companies active in Vietnam to store user data locally and remove “unlawful or false information” that infringes on national security, social order and safety, and the lawful rights and interests of agencies, organisations and individuals. It prohibits the use of cyberspace to, inter alia, organise and manipulate people to oppose the state; distort history and deny revolutionary achievements; and provide false information that causes confusion among the people. Breaches of the Law on Cybersecurity (2018) are subject to financial penalties and/or criminal prosecution, depending on the seriousness of the breach. International observers say these definitions are ambiguous and afford the Government of Vietnam wide-ranging discretion to determine what content should be censored; if interpreted liberally, they could be applied to any criticism of the state, economy or an individual’s private life.

‘The implementing decree (Decree 53) of the Law on Cybersecurity (2018) came into effect in October 2022, requiring technology companies to remove content deemed unlawful or false by the Government of Vietnam within 24 hours of an official request. In-country sources said compliance rates with Decree 53 were high. In response to Government of Vietnam requests, between July 2022 and June 2023, United States-based social media company Meta restricted 3,140 items (nearly all were Facebook posts) – a significant increase on previous reporting periods. According to Vietnam’s Ministry of Information, in the first six months of 2023, Facebook removed 2,549 posts and 12 accounts; YouTube removed 6,101 videos and seven channels; and TikTok removed 415 links and 149 offending accounts.

‘A non-binding National Code of Conduct for Social Media issued in June 2021 (‘Decision 847’) encourages social media users to post positively about Vietnam. International media reported in 2023 that the Government of Vietnam was considering introducing regulations requiring all social media account holders to identify themselves, and for Internet Service Providers to block from the Internet anybody who shares illegal content, although such

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<sup>67</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

regulations had not been introduced at the time of publication.’<sup>68</sup>

See [Censorship and monitoring](#)

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## 12.2 Access to the internet

12.2.1 According to the World Bank, 78% of the population (105.7 million people<sup>69</sup>) in Vietnam were internet users in 2023<sup>70</sup>.

12.2.2 Internet Monitoring Action Project (iMAP), whose aims include establishing ‘regional and in-country networks that monitor network interference and restrictions to the freedom of expression’<sup>71</sup>, noted in their iMap Vietnam 2024 Internet Censorship Report that: ‘In 2024, Vietnam’s internet penetration rate stood at 79.1% of the total population with 78.44 million internet users. On average, Vietnamese spend 6 hours and 18 minutes daily on the internet on all devices, and 98.9% of users access the internet via their mobile phones. In addition, there were 168.5 million cellular mobile connections in Vietnam at the start of 2024.’<sup>72</sup>

12.2.3 The Freedom on the Net 2024 report noted that:

‘Access to the internet has become more affordable for most segments of the population, including those in rural areas, but connectivity remains out of reach for those living in extreme poverty, which is found in many ethnic minority communities based in mountainous regions.

‘... There were no significant intentional disruptions to internet service or mobile networks during the coverage period. In the past, authorities have employed periodic throttling and sometimes restricted access to the internet for political or security reasons.

‘... The government retains the ability to restrict connectivity because of its technical control over infrastructure. While several companies have licenses to build infrastructure, the state-owned Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications Group (VNPT) and military-owned Viettel dominate the country’s telecommunications sector. Those firms make up two of the three major providers servicing internet exchange points (IXPs), which allocate bandwidth to ISPs.’<sup>73</sup>

12.2.4 The DFAT 2025 report stated that: ‘Vietnam has one of the highest proportions of Internet users in the world. ... The Government of Vietnam blocks websites considered politically sensitive, including the websites of foreign-based dissident groups and some foreign news services, including the BBC. In-country sources, speaking in October 2023, said these websites could be accessed through Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).’<sup>74</sup>

See [Censorship and monitoring](#)

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<sup>68</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.100- 3.102), 19 February 2025

<sup>69</sup> CIA, [Vietnam - The World Factbook](#), last updated 7 July 2025

<sup>70</sup> World Bank, [Viet Nam | Data](#), no date

<sup>71</sup> Internet Monitoring Action Project, [About iMAP](#), no date

<sup>72</sup> Internet Monitoring Action Project, [iMAP Vietnam 2024 Internet Censorship Report](#), 2024

<sup>73</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>74</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.97), 19 February 2025

## 12.3 Social networking sites

### 12.3.1 Reporters without borders noted that:

‘Independent bloggers and journalists are the only sources of freely reported news and information in a country where all the media follow orders from the Communist Party, in power since 1954 in the North and since 1975 in the South. With 86.4 million users – the seventh highest number in the world – Facebook is Vietnam’s most popular online platform and serves as a major tool for circulating news and information. The Vietnamese messaging app Zalo is also widely used to share information.’<sup>75</sup>

### 12.3.2 The iMAP Vietnam 2024 report, noted that: ‘With 72.7 million users, social media is widely used in Vietnam. An increase of 6.5 million (+9.8 percent) in social media users was noted between early 2023 and the beginning of 2024. Facebook, YouTube, Zalo, Tiktok, and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms in Vietnam. In Vietnam, there are 72.7 million Facebook users, 63 million YouTube users, 67.2 million TikTok users, and 10.9 million Instagram users ...’<sup>76</sup>

### 12.3.3 The Freedom on the Net 2024 report noted that: ‘Social media platforms and communication apps were not blocked during the coverage period. However, in April 2023, during the previous coverage period, the government discussed blocking TikTok over its failure to remove content that was allegedly in violation of Vietnamese laws.’<sup>77</sup>

### 12.3.4 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘Social media usage is widespread (approximately 80 per cent of the population) and represents the primary source of news for many Vietnamese. Facebook is particularly prevalent, with over 70 million users. YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Zalo (a local messaging application) are also popular tools for accessing news and circulating information. In country sources reported that the Government of Vietnam was wary of social media’s potential to challenge the state’s narrative on contentious issues and organise protests, and that it regularly pressured social media companies to remove critical accounts, posts and videos.’<sup>78</sup>

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## 12.4 Censorship and monitoring

### 12.4.1 The iMAP Vietnam 2024 report, noted that:

‘Censorship methods in Vietnam involve various measures aimed at regulating media outlets and online content. State-controlled media is prevalent to ensure that the information disseminated aligns with the government’s policies and viewpoints. ... popular social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Zalo are subject to government oversight, with frequent requests for content removal and site blocking.

‘... [Internet Service Providers] ISPs in Vietnam are required to comply with government regulations regarding internet censorship. There have been cases where ISPs have blocked access to specific websites or removed

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<sup>75</sup> Reporters Without Borders, [Vietnam](#), no date

<sup>76</sup> Internet Monitoring Action Project, [iMAP Vietnam 2024 Internet Censorship Report](#), 2024

<sup>77</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>78</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.97), 19 February 2025



content at the government's request. Failure to comply with these requests can result in penalties or revocation of operating licenses for the ISP.

‘... Citizens enjoy more freedom in online discussions, and blogging and social media have become alternative sources of information and opinions to official public media. Bloggers, activists, and social media users have written about controversial subjects in Vietnam, such as human rights, democracy, religions, political figures, the communist party, and the state. However, they have been made subject to strict censorship and surveillance by authorities, especially high-profile figures with many followers and readers.’<sup>79</sup>

12.4.2 PEN America noted in their oral statement to 4<sup>th</sup> UN UPR Cycle pre-session in Geneva that:

‘Traditional avenues of expression, including the press, television, radio, and other publications, are government-controlled, making social media platforms, like Facebook, important spaces for expression. The laws that require local data storage and data handover jeopardize writers’ free expression by expanding the state’s capacity for surveillance and censorship online. The Ministry of Information and Communications used the overly broad “toxic” category to block 2,000 websites in 2021, causing a significant chilling effect on online free expression.’<sup>80</sup>

12.4.3 The Freedom on the Net 2024 report stated:

‘Censorship frequently targets high-profile blogs or websites with many followers, as well as content considered threatening to the rule of the CPV, including discussion of social unrest or political dissent, advocacy for human rights and democracy, and criticism of the government’s reactions to border and maritime disputes with China. Content promoting organized religions that the state sees as a potential threat—including Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, and the Cao Đài group—is blocked to a lesser but still significant degree. Websites critical of the government, such as Việt Nam Thời báo, Báo Tiếng Dân, Văn Việt, The Vietnamese, and Bauxite Vietnam, are generally inaccessible. Access to international websites such as those of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Amnesty International (AI), and the Vietnamese-language services of Radio Free Asia (RFA), Voice of America (VOA), and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has almost always been blocked.

‘... Content was removed at an alarming rate during the coverage period, and the government used the Cybersecurity Law, which took effect in 2019, to pressure social media companies to comply with content removal requests. The regular removal of content has led users to employ the common practice of sharing screenshots of online articles that they think are likely to be removed later, rather than sharing the articles’ URLs.

‘Authorities have imposed heavy fines on online publications for publishing “false information” and required outlets to delete content that officials deem to be “illegal.”

‘... Force 47, a military unit of over 10,000 people that is tasked with fighting “wrong, distorting opinions online,” was established in 2017 and has since expanded into the district military branches of numerous provinces. Various

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<sup>79</sup> Internet Monitoring Action Project, [iMAP Vietnam 2024 Internet Censorship Report](#), 2024

<sup>80</sup> PEN America, [Advocating for Free Expression at the UN: Recommendations ...](#), 13 February 2024

reports during the coverage period indicated that the force was still active. In 2018, the CPV established Task Force 35 to counter purported propaganda against the state, including online information. Unlike Force 47, which is a military unit, Task Force 35 recruits agents and contributors from among government employees, progovernment political groups, and civilians across all economic sectors. They are then directed to manipulate online discussions and coordinate information operations; the group's operations continued during the coverage period.

'In June 2021, the state introduced a national set of guidelines on social media behavior, prohibiting posts that affect state interests and violate national law, and encouraging users to promote a positive image of Vietnam. The guidelines have rarely been publicly cited in any executive actions, though in April 2024, when user Nam Em was fined for causing "public anxiety" during a Facebook live-stream, authorities requested that she obey the national guidelines.'<sup>81</sup>

#### 12.4.4 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

'While people enjoy relatively more freedom online, the state monitors social media activity. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that former prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders and people with large online followings, including influencers (also known in Vietnam as Key Opinion Leaders, or KOLs) were most likely to have their social media activity monitored. However, these sources also said the state's online surveillance capabilities were broad, sophisticated and efficient, and social media users of low profile could also attract state attention based on the use of certain words in their posts (including retrospective posts). People who express critical views of the party or government online over a period of time, including those of a lower profile, were often arrested and convicted, usually for conducting anti-state propaganda or abusing democratic freedoms. According to in-country sources, monitoring of online activity had increased between 2021 and 2024, and the scope for freedom of expression online had narrowed in this time – where it occurred, criticism was more likely to be subtle and indirect.

'... In February 2024, the government launched social listening software with AI integration ('Socialbeat') to monitor, track and analyse in real time over 1 billion online items per day in Ho Chi Minh City, including content posted on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. Ho Chi Minh City's Department of Information and Communications said Socialbeat would help it better understand the opinions and needs of citizens and business in the city.

'In-country sources alleged in October 2023 that a Government of Vietnam cyber force known as 'Force 47' (also known as 'Regiment 47', 'AK47' or 'e47') monitored online discussions and trolled people who posted negative or misleading information about Vietnam. Reports suggest Force 47 was established in 2016 or 2017 and comprises 10,000 members ('cyber soldiers'), drawn primarily from the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union. In-country sources alleged that Force 47 hacked critical social media accounts and planted malware on the computers and mobile telephones of activists.'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>82</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.98, 3.102- 3.103), 19 February 2025

#### 12.4.5 Radio Free Asia reported in January 2025 that:

‘Social media posts from this year [2025] and last year [2024] suddenly disappeared temporarily from the Vietnamese-language Facebook pages of Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and the BBC this week. At about 10 p.m. local time on Tuesday, all posts from 2024 and 2025 vanished from RFA’s Vietnamese Facebook page, leaving ones from 2023 and earlier. They reappeared a few minutes later. The reason for their disappearance remains unknown.

‘... The three media outlets have been frequently criticized by Vietnam’s communist one-party government and state media for publishing stories deemed critical of the government. RFA contacted Meta, Facebook’s parent company, for an explanation but did not receive a response by publication time.’<sup>83</sup>

#### 12.4.6 The 88 Project report dated 26 May 2025 noted that:

‘In 2024, Facebook blocked or removed 8,981 posts that, according to authorities, contained false content and anti-state propaganda. That same year, at the behest of the government, Google censored 6,043 pieces of content and TikTok censored 971 videos. The three companies complied with more than 90% of censorship requests made by authorities. In 2022, the most recent year for which there is public data, Google complied with 95% of removal requests made by the government.

‘Most recently, on November 9, 2024, the government issued Decree 147, which grants additional control over online activities. The decree requires users to verify their accounts using a phone number or ID card, requires social media platforms to suspend users and remove content deemed illegal, and prevents social media users from engaging in independent journalism. In addition, the decree requires social media platforms to provide the government access to their internal search engines, a requirement that, if fulfilled, would enable mass surveillance.

‘... There is evidence that Vietnam has attempted to upgrade its social media surveillance capabilities by using AI technology. In 2024, Ho Chi Minh City and the Bac Kan provincial government began using SocialBeat, an AI-powered social listening software, to monitor social media platforms. SocialBeat can be used to trawl social media platforms for data and reportedly can collect and analyze more than two billion posts a day. According to a Ho Chi Minh City official, the software will be used to help city officials identify “hostile forces who are taking advantage of social networks and internet platforms to incite protests against the government”. Likewise, according to the Bac Kan provincial government, SocialBeat is used to monitor and observe associations, groups, and individuals on social media in order to detect information hostile to the government so the users can be identified and the posts can be “handled”.’<sup>84</sup>

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### 12.5 State treatment of bloggers, online activists and social media users

#### 12.5.1 The iMAP Vietnam 2024 report, noted that: ‘Furthermore, independent journalists and bloggers critical of the government often experience

<sup>83</sup> RFA, [Some content on RFA Vietnamese’s Facebook page suddenly disappears](#), 30 January 2025

<sup>84</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN ...](#), 26 May 2025

surveillance, and many are arrested and imprisoned for their activities.’<sup>85</sup>

12.5.2 PEN America noted in their oral statement to 4<sup>th</sup> UN UPR Cycle pre-session in Geneva that:

‘Furthermore, dissenting voices face harassment by pro-government digital militias Force 47 and E47, known for doxing and mass reporting on platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

‘... Since the last UPR review, an increasing number of writers have been detained. In 2019, PEN America documented 10 Vietnamese imprisoned writers. By 2022, that number had surged to 18, putting Vietnam fourth globally in imprisoning writers. These numbers are in addition to the 150+ journalists and activists that are imprisoned in Vietnam.

‘A significant subset of those detained are online commentators who express views on topics such as human rights, women’s rights, corruption, and other issues. These cases are often accompanied by violations of due process and fair trial rights that have undermined access to justice. The Vietnamese government imposes lengthy prison sentences and denies inmates adequate medical treatment. Authorities further intimidate and silence writers and artists through travel bans, equipment confiscation, and detentions based on artistic work.’<sup>86</sup>

12.5.3 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that: ‘The government continues to arrest and imprison bloggers and facebookers who advocate for peaceful political reforms, with the result that the state is called the “enemy of the internet.”’<sup>87</sup>

12.5.4 The Freedom on the Net report 2024 stated that:

‘Possible economic and social repercussions, in addition to the risk of criminal prosecution, lead to a high degree of self-censorship online. The unpredictable and nontransparent ways in which topics become prohibited make it difficult for users to know what areas might be off-limits, and bloggers and forum administrators routinely disable commenting functions to prevent controversial discussions.

‘A number of draconian laws and decrees also have a chilling effect on the online speech of activists, journalists, and ordinary users.

‘... Online outlets and ordinary users can be subjected to fines and suspensions based on content they post. A 2020 decree introduced administrative fines of up to 100 million dong (\$4,100) [£2852<sup>88</sup>] for anyone who stores or spreads information that is deemed to be false, distorting, and fictitious. These fines can be applied for offenses not serious enough to merit criminal prosecution.

‘... Articles 109, 117, and 331 of the penal code are commonly used to prosecute and imprison bloggers and online activists for the crimes of subversion, antistate propaganda, and abusing democratic freedoms. The articles also contain vaguely worded provisions that impose penalties of one to five years in prison for any actions taken in preparation for committing the

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<sup>85</sup> Internet Monitoring Action Project, [iMAP Vietnam 2024 Internet Censorship Report](#), 2024

<sup>86</sup> PEN America, [Advocating for Free Expression at the UN: Recommendations ...](#), 13 February 2024

<sup>87</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>88</sup> XE.com, [100,000,000 VND to GBP](#), 16 July 2024

main offenses in question.

‘... Prosecutions for online activities were common, and some bloggers and human rights defenders received lengthy prison sentences.

... Ordinary users are also prosecuted for their online activities.

‘... Bloggers and online activists are subject to frequent physical attacks, job loss, severed internet access, travel restrictions, and other rights violations. As a result, numerous Vietnamese activists have been forced to go into hiding or flee the country.

‘... Threats against the families of journalists have led them to cease their work in the past. During the coverage period, some family members of jailed activists reported constant harassment from authorities.

‘... Prominent bloggers and online activists experienced de facto house arrest several times during previous coverage periods. Others reported being summoned by police without warrants, or with warrants that provided no reasons or legal grounds, as another form of harassment in retaliation for their online activities.’<sup>89</sup>

#### 12.5.5 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘In 2023 and 2024, international media reported numerous instances of social media users being imprisoned on national security grounds (invariably under Articles 117 or 331 of the 2015 Criminal Code) for posting material deemed critical of the party, government (including local government, law enforcement and the judiciary) and Vietnam’s political leadership. Prison sentences ranged from two to eight years, and supervised probation was also applied in some cases. A number of journalists belonging to online-based media outlets have also been imprisoned for posting critical content. DFAT is aware of instances of people being arrested and imprisoned for social media posts critical of the Government of Vietnam’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. As is the case offline, online content promoting human rights or multi-party democracy, content critical of state policies, and content considered defamatory of the political leadership and state institutions (including corruption allegations) is highly sensitive. Financial penalties may also be applied for posting content deemed inappropriate or negative, and some activists are known to have had their social media accounts blocked or hacked.’<sup>90</sup>

#### 12.5.6 PEN America noted in Freedom to Write Index 2024 that:

‘Online commentator Nguyen Vu Binh was sentenced to seven years under Article 117 of the Vietnamese penal code. Binh, who was taken into custody by police in Hanoi on 29 February 2024, has been a contributing blogger to Radio Free Asia’s Vietnamese Service and was an honorary member of several PEN Centers. The recent defunding of the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) has severely impacted Radio Free Asia and similar networks, limiting their ability to support writers like Binh.

‘... Online commentator Dang Thi Hue, along with her friends and family, has faced ongoing harassment by the Vietnamese government. In May 2024, she was abducted by six individuals, one in a police uniform, and

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<sup>89</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>90</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.99), 19 February 2025



detained for over 24 hours. During interrogation, she was pressured to stop supporting prisoners of conscience and posting critical content on Facebook. After the interrogation, she was forced into hiding for her safety.

‘... While the internet and platforms like Facebook and YouTube offer spaces for dissent, they are increasingly subjected to government censorship.’<sup>91</sup>

- 12.5.7 At the time of writing in July 2025, the 88 Project listed the details of 38 bloggers. Eight were listed as ‘at risk’, 3 were ‘likely released- at risk’, 1 was deceased, 1 was listed as in pre-trial detention, 8 were listed as ‘released- at risk’, 3 was listed as ‘released- exiled’. Thirteen were sentenced to prison<sup>92</sup>.
- 12.5.8 At the time of writing in July 2025 PEN America recorded the details of 31 online commentators. PEN America describe online commentators as a: ‘blogger or social media commentator who writes original opinion-based content, including analysis and/or commentary’<sup>93</sup>. Of the 31 online commentators listed, 19 were in prison, 4 were displaced or in exile, 5 were released, 2 were harassed and 1 was detained<sup>94</sup>.
- 12.5.9 See [Annex A: Table on detained journalists, bloggers and writers](#) for more details of those recorded as detained on the 88 Project database and the PEN America database.

See [Detention](#).

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### 13. Monitoring of the diaspora

#### 13.1.1 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘Vietnam is sensitive to the activities of foreign-based dissident organisations led by members of the diaspora, including the Viet Tan, and considers such groups “reactionary” (some, including the Viet Tan, have been proscribed by the Government of Vietnam as terrorist organisations). According to international media, Vietnam has targeted dissidents outside of its borders in recent years, including high-profile cases in Thailand and Germany. In-country sources reported in October 2023 that Vietnam monitored dissidents abroad and their families inside Vietnam, who had also been subjected to questioning about their relatives’ activities and travel plans. DFAT is aware of reports of Vietnamese state agents attempting to attend closed door conferences organised by organisations of this profile. According to in-country sources, the Government of Vietnam had sophisticated surveillance capabilities and was able to monitor dissidents abroad, including online.’<sup>95</sup>

#### 13.1.2 In relation to the Vietnamese government’s interest in the diaspora, DFAT assessed:

‘Vietnamese people living abroad who have an established record of criticising the party and government, particularly those who are prominent in the diaspora, have high-profile affiliations with dissident diaspora groups and/or have large online followings and networks in Vietnam, are likely to be

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<sup>91</sup> PEN America, [Freedom to Write Index 2024](#), 24 April 2025

<sup>92</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 21 July 2025

<sup>93</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Project Public Methodology](#), no date

<sup>94</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>95</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.69- 3.70 & 3.104), 19 February 2025

known to, and have their activities monitored by, Vietnamese authorities. This may occur online and through party sympathisers and informants within the diaspora. Vietnamese people living abroad with a lower profile, including people attending public protests or expressing anti-government views, including online, are likely to be of significantly less interest, and their activities may not necessarily be known to the authorities.

‘Vietnamese people living abroad may also have their social media monitored, particularly people of high profile who are critical of the party and government, such as: people who hold leadership positions and have influence in the diaspora; have known affiliations with dissident diaspora groups; organise public protests against the party or government; and/or have large online followings and networks in Vietnam. Vietnamese people living abroad with a lower profile, including people attending public protests or expressing antigovernment views, including online, are likely to be of significantly less interest.’<sup>96</sup>

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## **14. Criminal justice system**

### **14.1 Judiciary**

#### **14.1.1 The BTI 2024 Country Report noted that:**

‘The justice system is under full control of the CPV. Chief justices and judges are party members and bound by the decisions made by party committees. The chief justice of the People’s Supreme Court (PSC) and the minister of public security are currently members of the politburo, while the chief of the People’s Supreme Procuracy is a member of the Central Committee. The chief justice and chief prosecutor are appointed by the state president, and the appointments are approved by the National Assembly. The selection and nomination of judges and procurators at all levels are screened and verified by the party committees where they are employed.’<sup>97</sup>

#### **14.1.2 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:**

‘The Supreme People’s Court in Hanoi is the highest judicial authority in Vietnam, headed by a Chief Justice. The Superior People’s Court (appeals court) is the second highest authority, with three courts in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang. Sitting beneath these are courts at the provincial and district levels. Provincial-level courts act both as first instance (trial) and second instance (appeal) courts. The Central Military Court hears military matters and is directly subordinate to the Supreme People’s Court. The National Assembly may establish special legal tribunals at the recommendation of the Chief Justice.’<sup>98</sup>

#### **14.1.3 The 88 Project report dated 26 May 2025 noted that:**

‘Courts are not independent in Vietnam. Despite lofty guarantees of judicial independence in the constitution, courts and judges are supervised by the state and direct political interference in trials is common. Senior justice officials have also expressed disdain for procedural fairness. In 2022, Le Minh Tri, the head of the prosecutorial authority, stated that “while it is important to protect human rights ... that is completely different from

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<sup>96</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.69- 3.70 & 3.104), 19 February 2025

<sup>97</sup> BTI, [BTI 2024 Vietnam Country Report](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>98</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 5.9), 19 February 2025

absolutely protecting the rights of criminal suspects or people who show signs of being connected to crimes.”<sup>99</sup>

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## 14.2 Access to a fair trial

### 14.2.1 The DFAT 2025 report stated that:

‘The Criminal Procedure Code (2015) enshrines the presumption of innocence. The law specifies that judges shall adjudicate independently; prohibits interference by bodies, organisations and individuals; provides that hearings shall be timely and public; and guarantees defendants the right to a defence. Closed trials are permitted under some circumstances (e.g. where state secrets might be divulged or where national customs or norms must be protected). Verdicts are required to be made public. According to in-country sources, speaking in October 2023, due process was not always respected in practice, particularly in cases involving alleged breaches of national security articles of the Criminal Code (2015), and that trials may fall short of international standards. Harsh sentences for serious crimes, including death for drug-related crimes and murder, are de rigueur. Under the Criminal Code (2015), the age of criminal responsibility is 14 years for serious crimes, including murder, rape, terrorism, the illegal production, trading or trafficking of narcotics, deliberate bodily harm, robbery and kidnapping for ransom, and 16 years for all other crimes.

‘The [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights] OHCHR has previously expressed “serious concern” about the independence of the judiciary and the right to a fair trial. In-country sources, speaking in October 2023, did not consider the judiciary to be independent of the CPV, particularly in politically sensitive cases and cases relating to national security. Most judges are CPV members (all candidates are screened by the party) and must reportedly follow CPV findings in their rulings.’<sup>100</sup>

### 14.2.2 Human Rights Watch noted in their World Report 2025 that:

‘Authorities use a double standard in treating criminal suspects depending on whether the crime is considered political or non-political. In both political and non-political cases, police, prosecutors, and courts violate the fundamental legal principle behind the right to a fair trial: a presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

‘In cases involving what the authorities consider “politically motivated offenses,” the government curbs defendants’ rights by denying them access to legal counsel; preventing visits by family members while the accused are in pretrial detention; and blocking family members, activists, and friends from attending their trials.’<sup>101</sup>

### 14.2.3 The same source noted in a report published in April 2025 that:

‘The justice system in Vietnam is neither impartial nor fair. All judges are Communist Party members and must obey instructions from the party. In all politically sensitive cases, verdicts are determined before trials begin. In recent history, all defendants charged in politically sensitive cases have

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<sup>99</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN ...](#), 26 May 2025

<sup>100</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 5.10- 5.11), 19 February 2025

<sup>101</sup> HRW, [World Report 2025: Vietnam](#), 16 January 2025



been found guilty.

‘It is not clear how verdicts are determined in politically sensitive cases. However, a recently unearthed archival document about the famous political case known as Nhan Van–Giai Pham Affair from 1960 revealed that the judge was acting under a direct order from the Communist Party. “The court belongs to the system of the State’s dictatorial apparatus,” the government document stated. The court “serves a political need, so it must always obey the leadership of the Party.”

‘Since that time, Vietnam has undergone numerous transformations, but the view that the justice system must serve a political need and obey orders from the Communist Party remains unchanged.’<sup>102</sup>

- 14.2.4 The 88 Project report dated 26 May 2025 noted that: ‘Human rights defenders are often denied legal representation during criminal investigations and even during trials. In recent years, at least 28 people have been denied legal representation after their arrest. And when nearly 100 defendants were tried in the Dak Lak case [[Vietnam rebel attacks: 98 go on trial accused of killing nine people](#)]<sup>103</sup>, they were represented as a group by just a few government-appointed lawyers.’<sup>104</sup>

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### 14.3 Detention

- 14.3.1 According to Defend the Defenders, a US based human rights organisation, as of 31 December 2023 there were 258 prisoners of conscience in prisons or other forms of detention. This number included political dissidents, bloggers, lawyers, unionists, land rights activists and adherents of unregistered religions<sup>105</sup>.
- 14.3.2 The Freedom on the Net 2024 report stated: ‘As of March 2024, 175 activists were being held in detention for exercising their fundamental rights, including freedom of expression. Several journalists, activists, and dissidents were given severe prison sentences during the coverage period, including under Article 117 of the penal code.’<sup>106</sup>
- 14.3.3 The DFAT 2025 report stated that: ‘The Government of Vietnam states it does not hold prisoners of conscience. This is disputed by international human rights organisations. .... In-country sources, speaking in October 2023, said prisoners of conscience faced more challenging prison conditions than the general prison population.’<sup>107</sup>
- 14.3.4 Human Rights Watch noted in their World Report 2025 that:
- ‘Party-controlled courts sentenced online free speech advocates and civil society activists to long prison sentences on bogus charges such as “propaganda” or “infringing on the interests” of the state. In 2024, courts convicted at least 43 rights campaigners and sentenced them to long prison terms, including human rights defenders Nguyen Chi Tuyen, Nguyen Vu Binh and Phan Van Bach, and environmental activist Ngo Thi To Nhen.

<sup>102</sup> HRW, [“We’ll All Be Arrested Soon”: Abusive Prosecutions under Vietnam’s ...](#), 21 April 2025

<sup>103</sup> BBC News, [Vietnam rebel attacks: 98 go on trial accused of killing nine people](#), 16 January 2024

<sup>104</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN ...](#), 26 May 2025

<sup>105</sup> Defend the Defenders, [Vietnam Holds 258 Prisoners of Conscience](#), 10 January 2024

<sup>106</sup> Freedom on the Net 2024, [Freedom on the Net 2024- Vietnam](#), 16 October 2024

<sup>107</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report Vietnam](#) (paragraphs 3.73), 19 February 2025

‘Several UN experts urged the government of Vietnam to end convictions and deplorable detention conditions for human rights defenders.

‘At time of writing, police were holding at least 19 other dissidents in pretrial detention on politically motivated charges, including blogger Truong Huy San and human rights lawyer Tran Dinh Trien. By the end of 2024, more than 170 rights activists and bloggers were serving prison sentences.’<sup>108</sup>

14.3.5 PEN America noted in Freedom to Write Index 2024 that:

‘Vietnam continued to deny access to medical treatment to prisoners including imprisoned online commentator and Independent Journalist Association Vietnam (IJAVN) member Le Huu Minh Tuan, who was sentenced to 11 years. Since he was taken into custody, Tuan’s health has worsened significantly. He can no longer eat solid foods and struggles to walk; his relatives report he is “pale” and “only bone and skin.” Despite repeated pleas from his family for over a year, Tuan has not received adequate medical care. Tuan’s colleagues, IJAVN president Pham Chi Dung and vice president Nguyen Tuong Thuy remain behind bars, sentenced to 15 and 11 years respectively.

‘Vietnam continues to imprison writers, journalists, and dissidents for long periods of time including 2024 PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Honoree Pham Doan Trang, who was sentenced to nine years in 2021 for “anti-state propaganda.” Authorities continue to deny her access to political, social, and international news, allowing her to watch only agricultural programs—a tactic that is clearly being used to punish her by depriving her of intellectual engagement and connection to the outside world.’<sup>109</sup>

14.3.6 The 88 Project report dated 26 May 2025 noted that:

‘Project88 has received credible allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners, particularly political prisoners, in Vietnam. According to testimony received by Project88, torture and beatings, the forced commitment of political prisoners to psychiatric institutes, denial of healthcare, and solitary confinement and incommunicado detention, are all commonly used against human rights defenders. Prisoners have also reported unsafe food, overcrowding, a lack of access to clean water, and poor sanitation. Moreover, political prisoners often face retaliation if they try to petition for improved prison conditions.

‘... The practice of holding political prisoners in pretrial detention is the norm in political cases in Vietnam. Project88’s data indicates that most political prisoners arrested in 2022 were held in pretrial detention, often incommunicado, with some held for nearly a year. Between January 2019 and October 2023, at least 51 human rights defenders were held in incommunicado pretrial detention for eight months or longer. And Project88 estimates that there are at least 20 individuals arrested in 2024 still in pretrial detention.’<sup>110</sup>

14.3.7 Amnesty International reports that: ‘Imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists and activists continued to be subjected to torture and other ill-

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<sup>108</sup> HRW, [World Report 2025: Vietnam](#), 16 January 2025

<sup>109</sup> PEN America, [Freedom to Write Index 2024](#), 24 April 2025

<sup>110</sup> The 88 Project, [Report on the Fourth Periodic review of Vietnam by the UN ...](#), 26 May 2025

treatment including denial of adequate healthcare.’<sup>111</sup>

14.3.8 Radio Free Asia reported in June 2025 that:

‘Prison conditions in Vietnam, especially for political prisoners, have long been criticized as harsh by international human rights organizations. Family members also complain that prisoners have contracted serious illnesses due to harsh living conditions — ranging from poor-quality food and unsafe drinking water to inadequate medical care. According to information from the relatives of prisoners, from 2019 until now, at least six political prisoners have died in detention centers ...’<sup>112</sup>

14.3.9 The 88 Project identified 198 activists who were imprisoned for expressing disapproval of the party or government, engaging in peaceful protest or belonging to a group not recognised by the government as of July 2025, of whom at least 41 have been arrested since 2023. This number includes those who have been jailed because of their political or religious beliefs<sup>113</sup>.

14.3.10 The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) reported that the UN HRC, following its review of Vietnam’s fourth periodic report on the implementation of the ICCPR, offered the following recommendations:

‘The [UN Human Rights Committee] CCPR expressed concern on the use of torture and ill-treatment against human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents, and ethnic and religious minorities, including solitary confinement, leg shackling and denial of medical treatment, and by reports of torture used to extract confessions which were used as evidence in court proceedings, including in cases involving the death penalty. They called on Vietnam to prevent and eradicate torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty have access to medical treatment and to an effective complaint mechanism to report incidents of torture and ill-treatment.

‘The UN experts observed a deterioration of prison conditions including overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, poor quality food and water, denial of medical care, and exposure to torture and ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement. The CCPR was also concerned by the discriminatory treatment between "regular prisoners" and prisoners of conscience. The CCPR called on the government to ensure that detention conditions comply with relevant international human rights standards and that prisoners of conscience are not subjected to discrimination.’<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Amnesty International, [Vietnam 2024 Human Rights Report](#), April 2025

<sup>112</sup> RFA, [Treatment of ailing independent journalist in prison 'a disgrace to Vietnam'](#), 25 June 2025

<sup>113</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 21 July 2025

<sup>114</sup> FIDH, [Vietnam: United Nations body highlights gross violations of civil and political...](#), 22 July 2025

# Annex A: Table on detained journalists, bloggers and writers

Using information from the 88 Project list<sup>115</sup> and the PEN America Writers at risk database<sup>116</sup> CPIT have produced the table below showing the details of journalists, bloggers (online commentators) and other writers who were listed as detained as of July 2025. Some of those may fall into more than one category (i.e. journalist and online commentator) where this is the case all categories have been included. Some of those listed are members of the Brotherhood for Democracy group and where this is the case their details have been highlighted in purple. See also [About the country information](#).

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Tran Anh Kim Occupation: Journalist, literary writer <sup>117</sup> , veteran <sup>118</sup>	21/09/15	December 2016 sentenced to 13 years in prison	Charged under Art 79 (subversion). At the time of his arrest, he was planning to establish a pro-democracy organization called the "National Force to Launch the Democracy Flag".
Name: Truong Minh Duc Occupation: Journalist <sup>119</sup>	30/07/17	April 2018 sentenced to 12 years in prison and 3 years house arrest	Charged under Art 79 (subversion). A journalist and labour rights activist - arrested for being a member of Brotherhood for Democracy.
Name: Truong Duy Nhat Occupation: Journalist <sup>120</sup> <sup>121</sup> , online commentator <sup>122</sup>	28/01/19	March 2020 sentenced to 10 years in prison	Charged under Art 356 (abusing his position and authority) for a land purchase that had taken place 10 years prior.

<sup>115</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>116</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>117</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>118</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>119</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>120</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>121</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>122</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Pham Chi Dung Occupation: Journalist <sup>123</sup> <sup>124</sup> , online commentator <sup>125</sup>	21/11/19	January 2021 sentenced to 15 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). Member of Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam IJAVN, accused of writing “reactionary content,” of publishing articles that “distort the truth, incite individuals to rise up and overthrow the people’s government, or even incite hatred and extremism”.
Name: Phan Cong Hai Occupation: Online commentator <sup>126</sup>	November 2019	In 2020 he was sentenced to 5 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”) for allegedly “making, storing, and disseminating information and materials”- authorities stated he posted commentary critical of the government on Facebook.
Name: Tran Duc Thach Occupation: Journalist <sup>127</sup> , literary writer, online commentator, poet <sup>128</sup>	23/04/20	December 2020 sentenced to 12 years in prison with 3 years probation.	Charged under Art 109 (activities aimed at overthrowing the government). He is known for his writing that exposes corruption and injustice but likely charged for his involvement with the Brotherhood for Democracy.

<sup>123</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>124</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>125</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>126</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>127</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>128</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Pham Chi Thanh Occupation: Journalist <sup>129 130</sup> , literary writer, online commentator <sup>131</sup>	21/05/20	July 2021 sentenced to 5 years and 6 months in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). Wrote a book that was deemed critical of Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.
Name: Nguyen Tuong Thuy Occupation: Journalist <sup>132</sup> , online commentator <sup>133</sup>	23/05/20	January 2021 sentenced to 11 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). Member of Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAVN), accused of writing “reactionary content,” of publishing articles that “distort the truth, incite individuals to rise up and overthrow the people’s government, or even incite hatred and extremism.”
Name: Le Huu Minh Tuan Occupation: Journalist <sup>134 135</sup> , online commentator <sup>136</sup>	12/06/20	January 2021 sentenced to 11 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). Member of IJAVN, accused of writing “reactionary content,” of publishing articles that “distort the truth, incite individuals to rise up and overthrow the people’s government, or even incite hatred and extremism.”

<sup>129</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>130</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>131</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>132</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>133</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>134</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>135</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>136</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date



Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Tran Thi Tuyet Dieu Occupation: Journalist <sup>137</sup>	21/08/20	April 2021 sentenced to 8 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). Accused of posting 25 news articles on Facebook and nine videos on YouTube whose content was deemed to be against the government.
Name: Quach Duy Occupation: Online commentator <sup>138</sup>	18/09/20	April 2021 sentenced to 4 years and 6 months in prison	Charged under Art 331 (“abusing democratic freedoms”) for stories written allegedly offending the honour and dignity of Vietnamese leaders and senior officials.
Name: Pham Doan Trang Occupation: Journalist <sup>139 140</sup> Activist, Literary writer, online commentator <sup>141</sup>	06/10/20	December 2021 sentenced to 9 years in prison	Initially charged under Art 88. Sentenced under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”).
Name: Nguyen Van Lam Occupation: Online commentator <sup>142</sup> , service industry <sup>143</sup>	06/11/20	July 2021 sentenced to 9 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”) for criticism of the government on his Facebook page.
Name: Le Trong Hung Occupation: Journalist <sup>144</sup>	29/03/21	December 2021 sentenced to 5 years in prison and 5 years probation.	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”) for distributing copies of the Constitution and advocating for independents running for seats in the National Assembly.

<sup>137</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>138</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>139</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>140</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>141</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>142</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>143</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>144</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Le Chi Thanh Occupation: Blogger <sup>145</sup>	14/04/21	January 2022 sentenced to 5 years in prison	Charged Art 330 (“obstructing officials carrying out government duties”) and Art 331 (“abusing democratic freedoms”) for posting videos of police abuse on YouTube.
Name: Le Van Dung Occupation: Blogger <sup>146</sup> ,	30/06/21	March 2022 sentenced to 5 years in prison and 5 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) for posting video clips allegedly defaming the communist party.
Name: Tran Hoang Huan Occupation: Online commentator <sup>147</sup>	10/08/21	Sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) for writing articles that “distort and defame the people’s government.”
Name: Bui Van Thuan Occupation: Blogger <sup>148</sup> , online commentator <sup>149</sup>	30/08/21	November 2022 sentenced to 8 years in prison and 5 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”). Accused of making online commentaries critical of the Communist Party and how it dealt with the pandemic. Also a member of Brotherhood for Democracy.
Name: Nguyen Thai Hung Occupation: Blogger <sup>150</sup>	05/01/22	November 2022 sentenced to 4 years in prison	Charged under Art 331 (abusing democratic freedoms). Had been sharing his views on the current country situation on his YouTube channel.

<sup>145</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>146</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>147</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>148</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>149</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>150</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Le Manh Ha Occupation: Blogger <sup>151</sup> , online commentator <sup>152</sup>	12/01/22	October 2022 sentenced to 8 years in prison and 5 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) accused of producing 21 video clips on his YouTube channel and posting 13 articles on his Facebook page about land grabs and corruption.
Name: Nguyen Lan Thang Occupation: Journalist <sup>153</sup> online commentator <sup>154</sup>	05/07/22	April 2023 sentenced to 6 years in prison and 2 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). He was accused of spreading 12 videos and two books with contents that allegedly defame the Party and the State.
Name: Dang Dang Phuoc Occupation: Online commentator, scholar <sup>155</sup> , teaching professional <sup>156</sup>	08/09/22	June 2023 sentenced to 8 years in prison and 4 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”). He regularly posted many articles and videos on his Facebook accounts, which the government alleged included distorting and anti-State content.
Name: Phan Son Tung Occupation: Blogger <sup>157</sup>	09/09/22	July 2023 sentenced to 6 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) for planning to establish an opposition political party.

<sup>151</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>152</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>153</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>154</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>155</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>156</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>157</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Duong Van Thai Occupation: Blogger <sup>158</sup> Journalist, online commentator <sup>159</sup>	13/04/23	October 2024 sentenced to 12 years in prison and 3 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”). A former blogger for Radio Free Asia he was a UN refugee in Thailand awaiting relocation to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> country but was allegedly abducted. He was arrested after a supposed “illegal entry attempt” from Laos.
Name: Phan Tat Thanh Occupation: Blogger <sup>160</sup>	13/07/23	May 2024 sentenced to 8 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) accused of posting 7 articles with “serious anti-government content”.
Name: Duong Tuan Ngoc Occupation: Blogger <sup>161</sup>	15/07/23	April 2024 sentenced to 7 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”) for posts made on social media about education, health and social issues that criticised the government.
Name: Phan Van Bach Occupation: Blogger <sup>162</sup>	29/12/23	September 2024 sentenced to 5 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (spreading “anti-state propaganda”). A former member of a YouTube channel specialising in social injustice.
Name: Phan Ngoc Dung Occupation: Blogger <sup>163</sup>	22/01/24	September 2024 sentenced to 3 years in prison	Charged under Art 331 (abusing democratic freedoms) for livestreaming on YouTube and posting 1200 posts and clips on Facebook providing commentary on the case of a death row inmate.

<sup>158</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>159</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>160</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>161</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>162</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>163</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

Personal details	Date arrested	Date sentenced	Details of charges
Name: Pham Van Cho Occupation: Online commentator <sup>164</sup>	30/01/24	July 2024 sentenced to 7 years in prison and 2 years probation	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”) for Facebook posts deemed offensive and defamatory of country’s leader.
Name: Nguyen Vu Binh Occupation: Journalist <sup>165 166</sup> , activist <sup>167</sup>	29/02/24	September 2024 sentenced to 7 years in prison	Charged under Art 117 (conducting “anti-State propaganda”). He was summoned to the police headquarters in Hanoi to discuss the YouTube channel TNT Media Live, which he and lawyer Nguyen Van Dai (currently in exile) worked on together from 2021 to 2022.
Name: Le Phu Tuan Occupation: Blogger <sup>168</sup>	29/03/24	August 2024 sentenced to 4 years and 8 months in prison	Charged under Art 331 (abusing democratic freedoms) for 21 videos posted to social media.
Name: Truong Huy San Occupation: Journalist <sup>169</sup> Literary writer, online commentator <sup>170</sup>	01/06/24	February 2025 sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in prison	Charged under Art 331 (“abusing democratic freedoms”). He was accused of posting 13 videos that “infringe on the interests of the state”.

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<sup>164</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>165</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>166</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>167</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

<sup>168</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>169</sup> The 88 Project, [Database](#), 9 July 2025

<sup>170</sup> PEN America, [Writers at Risk Database](#), no date

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Political system
  - Political structure
  - Political parties
  - Elections
- Illegal political parties
  - General
  - The Viet Tan
  - Other groups
- Legal context
  - Constitution
  - Penal code
- Protesters and human rights activists
  - Ability to protest
  - Protests on 'sensitive issues'
  - Land disputes
  - Ethnic and religious groups
  - State treatment
- Traditional media and journalists
  - Law
  - Media outlets
  - State treatment
  - Monitoring of the diaspora
- Internet, social media and bloggers
  - Law
  - Access to the internet
  - Social networking sites
  - Censorship and monitoring
  - State treatment of bloggers, online activists and social media users
- Arrests
  - Arrests of political activists, human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, members of civil society and dissidents

- Criminal justice system
  - Judiciary
  - Access to a fair trial
  - Prosecutions
  - Treatment in detention

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **5.0**
- valid from **17 September 2025**

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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