

DEATH OF ACTIVIST DINH DANG DINH SHOULD BE „WAKE-UP CALL“ FOR VIETNAM

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Amnesty International has paid tribute to Dinh Dang Dinh, the Vietnamese environmental activist, blogger and former prisoner of conscience, who has died aged 50.

The activist was unjustly jailed in 2011 after starting a petition against a mining project and was diagnosed with cancer while in prison.

The authorities only allowed Dinh Dang Dinh to be treated in hospital from January 2014, where he was kept under constant surveillance. He was released temporarily on medical grounds in February, before being released permanently in March.

Dinh Dang Dinh died of stomach cancer at his home in Dak Nong province in Viet Nam's Central Highlands yesterday evening.

“We join human rights defenders in Viet Nam and across the world in mourning the loss of Dinh Dang Dinh and express our deepest condolences to his family,” said Rupert Abbott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director.

“It is a tragedy that the Vietnamese authorities stole the last years of Dinh Dang Dinh's life, locking him up away from his loved ones.”

A former soldier and chemistry teacher, Dinh Dang Dinh was arrested in December 2011 after he had initiated a petition against bauxite mining in the Central Highlands.

He was sentenced to six years in jail in August 2012 for “conducting propaganda against the state”.

His trial lasted just three hours, before an unsuccessful appeal hearing was over in 45 minutes. His right to liberty was thus denied in proceedings that were as unfair and arbitrary as the charges against him. On leaving the appeals court, he was manhandled into a truck and security officials beat him over the head with clubs.

Scores of others remain imprisoned for speaking out in Viet Nam, with some prisoners of conscience locked up in harsh conditions for many years.

“The tragedy of Dinh Dang Dinh's passing should be a wake-up call for Viet Nam,” said Rupert Abbott

“Viet Nam must immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience who - like Dinh Dang Dinh - have done no more than peacefully express their opinion.”

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/death-activist-dinh-dang-dinh-should-be-wake-call-vietnam-2014-04-04>