

**Nach einer 37-jährigen Haftstrafe freigelassen**

## **AILING VIETNAMESE DISSIDENT FREED AFTER THREE DECADES BEHIND BARS**

**An Nguyen/RFA**

Nguyen Huu Cau in a cell phone photo taken at the Xuan Loc prison in Dong Nai on June 4, 2013 by his granddaughter Tran Phan Yen Nhi during her first meeting with him.

Photo courtesy of Tran Phan Yen Nhi's family

One of Vietnam's longest-jailed political prisoners has been freed after receiving an amnesty from President Truong Tan Sang while battling severe illness, according to his son.

Poet Nguyen Huu Cau, 68, a former officer in the South Vietnamese army who has spent more than three decades behind bars, was released into his family's care from the Xuan Loc prison in southern Vietnam's Dong Nai province on Friday before being hospitalized on Saturday.

His discharge, which follows repeated pleas from his family for medical parole to treat his heart condition and low cerebral blood flow, came on orders for his permanent release signed by President Sang and dated Friday, according to a notice delivered to his family.

The amnesty was the second given to a Vietnamese political prisoner last week, after Sang quashed the jail sentence of cancer-stricken dissident teacher Dinh Dang Dinh.

Cau, who was serving a life sentence on charges of "undermining unity," suffers from a blood flow problem known as ischemia and has gone mostly deaf and nearly blind in what rights groups say is the result of harsh conditions and inadequate medical care in prison.

### **'In pain'**

He was escorted to his son Tran Ngoc Bich's home in Kien Giang province and is now being treated at the provincial Binh An hospital in Rach Gia, Bich told RFA's Vietnamese Service.

"He keeps telling me he is in pain," Bich said. Cau is in feeble condition, though improved somewhat after receiving a blood transfusion on Monday, Bich said.

Bich took Cau to the district hospital on Saturday morning, after Cau was too weak to sit up on his own, and doctors there told him he needed more serious treatment at a better facility, he said.

"They said we had to send him to the provincial hospital because the blood flow to his brain and heart was very low."

A prison doctor, two provincial policemen, and another official had delivered a notice of the amnesty to Bich's home around 7:00 Friday morning and Cau had arrived there around 9:00 p.m., Bich said.

The notice included instructions for Cau to register himself with local authorities, Bich said.

"In the amnesty notice, there is a line saying my father would have to present himself at the local government office today. But he is sick and in the hospital so I went there and explained my father's situation. They did not say anything."

## **Repeated appeals**

Cau's relatives and international rights groups had over the past year warned that his condition was rapidly deteriorating, issuing public appeals to authorities for his release—including a petition his teenage granddaughter sent to President Sang in July.

Cau has been imprisoned since 1982, when he was arrested over poems and songs he wrote about corruption and abuse of power by officials.

He was given a death sentence which was reduced on appeal to life in prison.

Before that, Cau served six years in a re-education camp after he was arrested in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War.

On the same day as Cau was released from prison, authorities delivered an amnesty notice to dissident teacher and blogger Dinh Dang Dinh, who was jailed on “anti-state propaganda” charges two and a half years ago and is suffering from terminal stomach cancer.

The amnesty granted permanent release to Dinh, who had already received a 12-month suspension of his sentence, but came too late to make a difference in his chances of survival, his wife said.

***Reported by An Nguyen for RFA's Vietnamese Service. Written in English by Rachel Vandenbrink.***

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