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Dear Minister,

More information about the “severe mistakes” committed by Da Nang Publishing

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is concerned about the 3-month ban imposed on the Da Nang Publishing House and is hereby seeking clarification about the motives and circumstances leading to this temporary ban. In particular, IPA would appreciate if you would shed light on the disciplinary measures targeting the staff and on the “severe mistakes” committed by Da Nang. IPA is also calling upon your Ministry to reinstate the license of Da Nang at the end of the probation period in mid-March 2009.

IPA is the global non-governmental organization representing all aspects of book and journal publishing worldwide. Established in 1896, IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness for publishing as a force for cultural and political advancement worldwide. IPA is an industry association with a human rights mandate. IPA is an accredited non-governmental organisation enjoying observer status to the United Nations. IPA currently has 65 member associations in 53 countries.

According to information we have received, your deputy, Mr. Do Quy Doan, issued a penalty on 12 December 2008 on behalf of the Ministry, putting all of Da Nang's activities on hold for 3 months because it would have committed “severe mistakes” in publishing a book entitled *Rong Da* (*Stone Dragon*) authored by Mr. Vo Ngoc Tien and Le Mai. According to the same sources, the penalty would be in effect from 15 December 2008 to 15 March 2009. After this probation period, Da Nang would have to submit a report to your Ministry for it to decide whether or not to re-instate Da Nang's publishing license.

Your Ministry would have also decided to “discipline” all of the Da Nang staff deemed responsible for the publishing of *Rong Da*. In addition, the staff of this publishing house under licence since 1984 would have been replaced by new staff.

The 28th IPA Publishers Congress, meeting in Seoul, Korea, in May 2008, passed a resolution calling on Vietnam “to engage and implement reforms, which will improve the freedom to publish in your country and will allow publishers to contribute freely to the cultural, social and economic wealth of Vietnam without fear of imprisonment, persecution or harassment for themselves, and their associates”. For a detailed overview of IPA's position on Vietnam's publishing laws, you will find attached a letter dated 20 June 2008.

International Publishers Association

To conclude, IPA enjoys strong relations with governments and intergovernmental bodies all over the world and would like to take this opportunity to encourage your Government to take the path described in the IPA Congress resolution above in the spirit of Article 19 of the International Covenant and Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Vietnam acceded to in 1982. We would be grateful if you would kindly inform us about the reasons, conditions, and consequences of the ban. We would also see a reinstatement of Da Nang publishing as it was before 12 December 2008 as encouraging. Finally, in the run up to the fifth session of the Universal Periodical Review (UPR) Working Group this May, we would be delighted to follow up on this issue with the permanent mission of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva.

Yours sincerely,



Bjorn Smith-Simonsen
IPA Freedom to Publish
Committee Chair

CC:

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