

## A mother and her family fight against land grabs in Vietnam

Hanoi, Vietnam

2007 – ongoing

Can Thi Theu is a land rights defender from Vietnam who has been campaigning against and documenting land seizures in Hanoi and its surrounding provinces ever since her family's farm was confiscated in 2007. Simply for calling for adequate compensation for the confiscation of local people's land, she has been beaten and imprisoned.

All land in Vietnam is technically owned by the State, and citizens only have the right to use it. This situation has led to thousands of people, who have lived on land and worked it for decades, having it suddenly taken away, with little or no compensation.

In April 2014, Can Thi Theu and her husband, Trinh Ba Tu, were arrested while using a camera to document a land grab in Ha Dong district in Hanoi. They had filmed police attacking local residents and protesters with sticks and batons. During the course of her arrest, she was beaten by police and charged with 'resisting on-duty state officials.' On her release from prison in July 2015 (after 15 months), Can Thi Theu continued to engage in peaceful demonstrations calling for the return of land that had been confiscated by the local authorities.

In January 2016 Can Thi Thue was briefly detained in Hanoi for protesting against attempts by the local government to seize family farms.

In the early hours of 10 June 2016, several dozen police officers arrived at Can Thi Theu's family home in Hoa Binh province in the north of Vietnam. They searched her house, confiscated her mobile phone and detained her under Article 245 of Vietnam's Penal Code on a charge of 'causing public disorder.' The authorities alleged that she had been involved in disturbances in the Dong Da district of Hanoi. If found guilty, she could face up to seven years in prison. Can Thi Thue went on a hunger strike for 13 days immediately following her arrest. She stopped on 22nd June on the advice from her lawyer, after he became alarmed at her deteriorating health.

The charges she faces reportedly relate to her role in organising a peaceful demonstration on 8 April 2016, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the founding of a pro-democracy group and demanding the release of detained human rights lawyer Mr Nguyen Van Dai.

Can Thi Thue's sons, Trinh Ba Tu and Trinh Ba Phuong, were briefly detained on 13 June 2016 for calling for their mother's release.

Can Thi Thue's case has been highlighted by Front Line Defenders. FLD has issued an urgent appeal, calling on the Vietnamese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Can Thi Thue and Ngyen Van Dai, and ensure their physical and psychological integrity and security.