

**BY AIRMAIL**

Phu Yen Bar Association  
Attn.: Attorney Nguyen Huong Que  
176 Nguyen Huephuong 7,  
thanh pho Tuy Hoa  
tinh PHU YEN, **VIETNAM**

Amsterdam, 16 January 2014

Re: Mr. Vo An Don

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation ('*Stichting Advocaten voor Advocaten*') expresses its grave concerns about the request by Vietnamese authorities to withdraw the lawyers license of our colleague, Mr. Vo An Don, a respected lawyer.

According to our information, Mr. Vo An Don has recently acted as the defense lawyer for a victim of police brutality while in custody. As such, Mr. Don has done courageous work for the rule of law in Vietnam and he should be allowed to continue his work without interference.

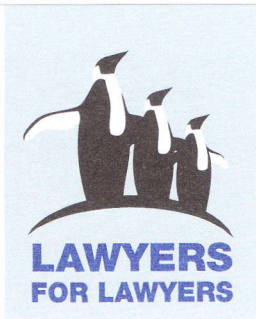
However, it has come to our attention that Mr. Vo An Don may have his lawyer's license revoked following a request by several Vietnamese government offices, such as the police, prosecutors and the court of Tuy Hoa City, where the trial at first instance took place.

The collective request wrote: "*During the trial court between March 26 and April 3, lawyer Vo An Don took advantage of his occupation and used indecent language to insult the participants in the proceedings and incumbent political leaders in the administration.*"

The authorities also accused lawyer Don of "*having many articles, interviews and comments published on social media networks and domestic and international fora, in which he provided a lot of misleading information and unlawful opinions that fail to fulfill lawyers' social responsibilities.*" As such, they concluded that lawyer Don "*created a bad focal point for public opinion, thus harming political security and social order in the province.*"

In addition, we have been informed as a result of his work as a defense lawyer against police brutality, lawyer Don has been subjected to harassment and retaliation by the authorities. Lawyer Don has received several death threats from the police and hired thugs. Moreover, on January 8, 2015 lawyer Don received an order from the authorities to audit his law practice. As his law office is the only law office in the city to be audited in 2015, lawyer Don views this as another act of harassment.

As a member of the United Nations Assembly, Vietnam is bound by the UN Basic Principles of the Role of Lawyers adopted by the Assembly in 1990. Even though the protection of the legal profession is primarily the responsibility of governments, this responsibility also extends to your organization. In this respect, we call upon you to acknowledge the vital role professional associations of lawyers have to play in protecting their members from persecution and improper restrictions and infringements and in



providing legal services to all in need of them. We would draw your attention to paragraph 10 of the Preamble and Articles 16 and 25 of the Principles in particular which state that:

*Preamble. Whereas professional associations of lawyers have a vital role to play in upholding professional standards and ethics, protecting their members from persecution and improper restrictions and infringements, providing legal services to all in need of them, and cooperating with governmental and other institutions in furthering the ends of justice and public interest, The Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, (...) which have been formulated to assist Member States in their task of promoting and ensuring the proper role of lawyers (...)*

*16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

*25. Professional associations of lawyers shall cooperate with Governments to ensure that everyone has effective and equal access to legal services and that lawyers are able, without proper interference, to counsel and assist their clients in accordance with the law and recognized professional standards and ethics.*

In light of the above, we urge you and your organization to reject the request of aforementioned government offices to revoke the license of lawyer Don and to stop the harassment on him and his law office in order to enable him to continue his valuable work as a lawyer.

We thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident of your good will and sense of justice and will continue to monitor this case closely.

Sincerely,

**Lawyers for Lawyers**

Adrie van de Streek  
Executive Director

Copies of this letter were sent to:

- The People's Committee of Phu Yen Province, Chairman Pham Dinh Cu
- The Justice Department of Phu Yen Province, Director Nguyen Cong Danh
- The People's Committee of Phu Yen Province, Chairman Pham Dinh Cu