

# Vietnam arrests popular blogger

HANOI, VIETNAM: A prominent Vietnamese blogger has been arrested for posting articles critical of the communist government, reports said Monday, in the latest crackdown on dissent in the authoritarian country.

Truong Duy Nhat, 49, was detained Sunday at his home in the coastal city of Da Nang and escorted to Vietnam's capital Hanoi for questioning, the state-run Tuoi Tre newspaper said.

He stands accused of "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe on the interests of the state", a charge that could bring a maximum seven years in jail, the report said.

Nhat, who had worked for Vietnam's official press but quit in 2011, writes the popular blog "A Different Viewpoint".

His blog, "offering an alternative perspective" on news events from the staid official press, propelled him to nationwide recognition and "often attracted heated debate", the state-run Thanh Nien newspaper reported.

It has not been possible to access his blog, which frequently dealt with highly sensitive political issues, since his arrest.

In a late April post, Nhat called for Vietnam's top leaders to resign, saying "it's time for a new party general secretary and prime minister" to save the nation from its economic and political woes.

## It's just Nhat on!

Vietnam's many bloggers reacted strongly to Nhat's arrest, with one, Huynh Ngoc Chenh, writing that Nhat was a fiercely independent commentator who was likely detained after angering those in power.

"His frank and strong criticism is hard to take on board, especially for people in leadership positions, and it could generate hatred towards him," Chenh wrote on his personal blog.

Another online commentator, writing under the name Nam Mo, called Nhat's arrest "a harsh blow on our fledgling democracy" and said it should be a wake up call to all Internet activists.

"Nhat will not be the only victim of this authoritarian government, unless Vietnamese bloggers learn how to unite even when they don't know each other," he wrote.

Vietnam bans private media, with all newspapers and television channels state-run. Lawyers, bloggers and activists are regularly subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, according to rights groups.

In February journalist Nguyen Dac Kien was fired from his state-run newspaper after criticising the head of the ruling Communist Party on his personal blog.

So far in 2013, at least 38 activists have been convicted of anti-state activity under what rights groups say are vaguely defined articles of the penal code.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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