

Extrait du Reporters Sans Frontières

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Vietnam

- Anglais - Information - Annual Reports - 2009 -

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Description :

- Area: 331,690 sq. km.
- Population: 86,116,559
- Language: Vietnamese
- Head of state: Nguyen Minh Triet, since June 2006

Reporters Sans Frontières

Apart from underground dissident and online publications, Vietnam has no independent media. The written press, television and radio are all under the control of Hanoi. However the press is being modernised and efforts are made to roll back censorship. A dozen journalists and cyber-dissidents are currently in prison.

The government in 2008 slammed the brakes on the reformist media's gradual moves towards freedom. Two investigative journalists on the newspapers *Thanh Nien* and *Tuoi Tre* were tried for exposing a major corruption case. One was sentenced to two years in prison for "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe the interests of the state". He was released at the start of 2009 as a result of a widespread international outcry.

The trial was accompanied by a purge of the most open media with the result noted by one Vietnamese journalist who lamented: "These media have lost their edge. It has put us back ten years".

Competition has developed between the leading media, even though they all remain under the authority of their supervisory body: the communist party, the army, the official news agency or local councils. But the journalists, especially the younger and increasingly better trained ones, do sometimes diverge from the sole party's editorial directives. The freest media is without doubt the website VietnamNet which still dares to raise awkward issues.

National radio stations, under the control of the prime minister's office and the communist party central committee, are popular with listeners, as are the Vietnamese language programmes put out by international radio channels such as the *BBC* and *RFI*. Unfortunately, these two can only be heard on medium or short wave, since the government has refused to give them licences for FM frequencies, with the evident aim of limiting their audiences.

Added to this, the political police carry on a relentless struggle against opposition movements and dissident publications. Two journalists and seven cyber-dissidents were jailed at the start of 2009. One of these was the priest, **Nguyen Van Ly**, publisher of dissident magazine *Tu do Ngon luan*, who was jailed for eight years for "propaganda against the socialist republic of Vietnam".

The police also make use of "people's courts" to intimidate dissidents. Residents of a neighbourhood are invited to speak at the court to denounce and condemn an accused person, a form of justice from another age that flouts the right to a defence as well as any fairness.

The authorities keep the popular Web under close watch. They block access to websites deemed to be "reactionary", particularly those run by foreign-based dissidents. Around 30 cyber-dissidents have been arrested since 2002, one of whom was sentenced to 12 years in prison. The government in January 2009, adopted Circular n°7, banning political content in blogs.

The cyber-police are responsible for strengthening surveillance. Human rights defender, **Nguyen Hoaong Hai**, nicknamed Dieu Cay, is one victim of this. He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison, after setting up the Free Vietnamese Journalists Club, gathering independent bloggers.

There are more than 600 publications in the country, including the "organs of the state" as the communist party daily *The People*. But they are all liable to be punished for "serious violations of the press law". This happened to the tourism authority magazine *Du Lich*, banned for three months for carrying articles about the Paracels and Spratleys

islands, which are the subject of a major territorial dispute with China.

President Nguyen Minh Triet replied to a question from a European journalist in May 2008, saying, "Perhaps it is difficult for you to understand the love we have for people and the love we have for human rights. But people who violate the law must be punished."



Country fact-sheet in vietnamese

Post-scriptum :

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