**[www.standwithbach.org](http://www.standwithbach.org)**

**#StandwithBach**

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**Climate Justice and Human Rights Groups Worldwide Launch One-Month Relay Hunger Strike Calling for Urgent Release of Vietnamese Climate Leader, Dang Dinh Bach**

Climate justice and human rights organizations from around the globe are rallying around prominent Vietnamese environmental lawyer, [Mr. Dang Dinh Bach](http://www.standwithbach.org), on the two-year anniversary of his arrest with the launch of the#StandwithBach hunger strike. A public letter was also released today by [over 80 organizations worldwide](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63a1054de4b8030902eec458/t/646d3cd63ad6487e56fc5e18/1684880598442/Organizational+Sign-On+Letter+Calling+for+the+Release+of+Dang+Dinh+Bach+and+Support+of+Civil+Society+in+Vietnam%E2%80%99s+Just+Energy+Transition.pdf) calling for Bach’s immediate release, along with [a petition](https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/stand_with_bach_2023/) and social media campaign.

Bach was imprisoned for “tax evasion” after leading a campaign to reduce Vietnam’s reliance on coal. He [declared](https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/news/vietnamnews/imprisoned-activist-dang-dinh-bach-urges-vietnam-to-stop-suppressing-civil-groups-03232023061620.html) that on June 24, 2023 - the second anniversary of his arrest - he will go on a hunger strike to the death in defense of his innocence. In his own spirit of nonviolent and peaceful protest the May 24 - June 24 “relay hunger strike” - in which at least one organization per day will strike in solidarity with Bach - hopes to raise awareness about this extreme injustice and prevent the need for him to risk his own life. Participating groups are from the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Thailand, Spain, South Korea, Palestine, South Africa, and more countries around the world.

“Bach is a climate champion and should not be punished for his participation in Vietnam’s clean energy transition,” said Meena Jagannath, Coordinator of the Global Network of Movement Lawyers at Movement Law Lab, of which Bach’s organization was a part before being forced to shut down. “It's crucial for human rights lawyers and environmental defenders to stand up worldwide for our colleague in Vietnam. This kind of solidarity is vitally important for the future of the region and the planet. Right now, we are all concerned for his life.”

As the founder of the Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Centre, Bach dedicated his life to protecting communities from harmful pollution, phasing out plastic waste, and supporting the government’s transition to clean energy. He is one of four members of the Vietnam Sustainable Energy Alliance who have been imprisoned in Vietnam, despite playing an instrumental role in the country’s ambitious climate commitments, indicating an [ongoing and highly concerning trend](https://news.mongabay.com/2023/02/vietnams-environmental-ngos-face-uncertain-status-shrinking-civic-space/). International renowned climate leader and Goldman Environmental Prize winner, [Ms. Nguy Thi Khanh](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/17/world/asia/nguy-thi-khanh-environmental-activist-arrested.html), was arrested on similar charges and [released this month](https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/nguy-thi-khanh-05162023150654.html) after serving 16 months in prison.

The imprisonment of climate leaders in Vietnam has ironically all occurred in the wake of the Vietnamese government’s commitment to [net zero emissions by 2050](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/vietnam-targeting-carbon-emission-neutrality-by-2050-minister-says-2021-11-01/) and the [$15.5 billion](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-agreement-to-support-vietnams-ambitious-climate-and-energy-goals) deal announced in December by the U.K., U.S., and other governments to support a Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) in Vietnam. Right now, the JETP implementation plan is being developed, and the coalition supporting Bach is urging decision-makers to ensure that civil society is welcome to participate meaningfully in this process without the threat of arrest.

“A just energy transition cannot be successful with people like Bach in jail,” said Maureen Harris, Senior Advisory from International Rivers. “The result of such a repressive environment is that civil society is effectively excluded from negotiating spaces and deliberations around energy transition partnerships, programs, and projects, even as they proclaim to be ‘just’”.

Bach was not granted a fair trial. He was not allowed to meet with his lawyer until seven months after he was arrested and his sentence was much harsher than is usual for people accused of tax evasion. United Nations experts suggest that Bach’s prosecution was [politically motivated](https://bangkok.ohchr.org/viet-nam-rights-defenders/).

Just last week the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [released an opinion](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63a1054de4b8030902eec458/t/6466cd597b77694c69cd20ba/1684458842140/UN+WGAD+Opinion+No.+22%3A2023+Dang+Dinh+Bach.pdf) regarding Bach’s imprisonment, finding it a “violation of international law” and expressing concerns about a “systemic problem with arbitrary detention” of environmental defenders in Vietnam.

The coalition is urging all governments, multilateral institutions, and others invested in a just energy transition for Vietnam to 1) insist on Bach’s release; and 2) demand that civil society in Vietnam is welcome to participate meaningfully in the just energy transition process.

“I have witnessed so many painful stories of poverty and terrible diseases that weigh on abused communities in Vietnam,” said Bach in a recent statement from prison. “They are deprived of their land and livelihoods and do not have opportunities to speak out for justice and the right to be human in the face of environmental pollution, especially in places with coal-fired power plants across the country. In order to conceal the truth and threaten the voices of people, the Vietnamese authorities have arrested, convicted and unjustly detained environmental and human rights activists in defiance of national and international law.”

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