



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 24, 2025

MEDIA CONTACT: v4climateleaders@gmail.com

Vietnamese Climate Leader Mr. Dang Dinh Bach to Spend Fourth Tết Holiday (Vietnamese New Year) in Prison

Bach to Receive Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty for Human Rights While Behind Bars

Today - Friday, January 24th - marks three years since climate leader [Mr. Dang Dinh Bach](#) (Bach) was sentenced to prison for his campaign to reduce Vietnamese reliance on coal and other destructive energy projects. It is also Bach's fourth Tết Lunar New Year - coming up on Wednesday, January 29th - spent behind bars, separated from his young family.

Despite his imprisonment, Bach's advocacy continues to earn international recognition. Today he was awarded the prestigious [Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty](#) for his unwavering commitment to environmental justice. The medal is awarded by [Human Rights First](#), a US-based advocacy group working to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law. Today is also the [Day of the Endangered Lawyer](#), meant to call attention to threatened human rights lawyers.

In honor of the upcoming Tết holiday, the Vietnam Climate Defenders coalition has released a [new video](#) calling attention to Bach's condition and asking the public to think of him – an environmental lawyer behind bars – during this time and while gathering with their own families. The video is also available in Vietnamese [here](#). A [global solidarity letter-writing campaign](#) is underway in recognition of the extreme injustice and human rights violations Bach is enduring.

In 2022, Vietnam secured the [\\$15.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership](#) (JETP) from the UK, the EU, the U.S., and other G7 countries plus Denmark and Norway (together known as the International Partners Group or IPG). However, the 'just' aspect of the partnership remains [missing from the implementation of the JETP](#). The imprisonment of climate leaders like Bach, and targeted attacks on independent organizations in Vietnam, severely limits – if not eliminates – genuine opportunities for consultation with civil society – a necessary aspect of a "just" transition.

Despite the ongoing targeting of climate leaders in Vietnam, development partners continue to finance the JETP. This includes the EU's release of an additional [15 million EUR](#) of budget support just last month.

"The criminalization of environmental leaders in Vietnam must end," said Maureen Harris, Senior Advisor for International Rivers, part of the Vietnam Climate Defenders Coalition. "Bach should be with his family this New Year. Instead, he will spend the holiday in a prison cell."

Bach is being detained in a ward designated for political prisoners and has [faced harsh and degrading treatment](#) in prison. In May 2023, his arrest and detention were deemed by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to be arbitrary and "[a violation of international law on the grounds of discrimination based on political or other opinion, related to his environmental work](#)." There have been multiple international calls for his release.

Bach's jailing is part of a greater trend: [Vietnam's vague tax laws are being weaponized](#) to silence climate and environmental defenders through arbitrary enforcement and disproportionately harsh penalties for civil society organizations and individuals working on energy and environmental issues. This, together with restrictive policies criminalizing access to information and public participation in the country's energy policies, has led to a country-wide chilling effect. Multiple non-governmental organizations have been forced to close down, curtail their operations, or face harassment and scrutiny from authorities.

#