

COERCED ON CAMERA

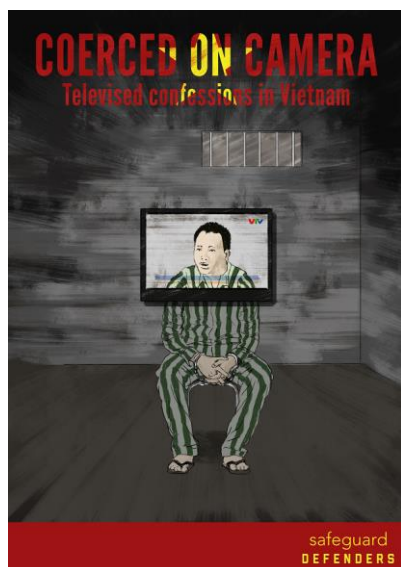
Televised confessions in Vietnam

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COERCED ON CAMERA: Televised Confessions in Vietnam

2020-03-11: Vietnam's abuse of pre-trial detainees comes into the spotlight today with the publication of Safeguard Defenders' *Coerced on Camera: Televised Confessions in Vietnam*. The report is the first ever study on the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's practice of broadcasting forced "statements" from victims detained but not yet tried, in clear violation of Vietnam's obligations under international law.



Coerced on Camera provides a snapshot of how Vietnam routinely airs pre-trial detainees confessing on local media as well as on national state broadcaster VTV. The report captured and analysed more than a dozen confession broadcasts of rights defenders including well-respected lawyers, citizen journalists and villagers as well as individuals in murder and corruption cases. Interviews with victims exposed how police manipulate or script the confession to camera, trick or coerce prisoners into cooperating, and how those detained are denied access to legal counsel.

Vietnam has long been overshadowed by China, another authoritarian country that uses forced televised confessions to stifle dissent, isolate rights defenders, and to send messages to foreign governments and organizations to counter criticism. We used our ground-breaking 2018 report *Scripted and Staged: Behind the Scenes of China's Forced Televised Confessions*, the first in-depth study of China's practice of airing forced confessions, to compare the practice in the two countries. Like China, Vietnamese victims confessed to anti-State crimes and thanked the authorities for showing them the error of their ways but in general the broadcasts were more simply produced, lacking Beijing's sophisticated treatment.

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A worrying development in recent years appears to indicate that Vietnam is copying some of China's tricks – including the confession of a former state official who was kidnapped from Germany in 2017 and forced on camera to say he had returned of his own volition; the 2018 broadcast of the first foreigner confessing on Vietnamese television; and the most recent case in January 2020 of villagers fighting to prevent their farmland being appropriated coerced to incriminate each other on camera. A few years earlier, these kinds of televised confessions started being broadcast on Chinese television. The production value of Vietnam's confessions has also markedly improved.

Forced televised confessions not only break Vietnam's own laws on the right to counsel, fair trial and protection against torture and self-incrimination, they are also grave violations of its obligations as Party to international human rights treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other judicial protections.

Safeguard Defenders calls on the Vietnamese government to live up to its responsibilities as a signatory to the International Covenant on Political & Civil Rights and UN Convention Against Torture, to comply with its own domestic laws prohibiting forced confessions and to immediately stop the illegal practice of airing forced confessions of detainees on television and afford them the proper protections that due process and the rule of law affords.

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Download report: <https://safeguarddefenders.com/en/blog/coerced-camera-how-vietnam-forces-detainees-confess-tv>

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