

Press Release

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Vietnam's Liberal Publishing House awarded 2020 Prix Voltaire



Liberal Publishing House Logo

The International Publishers Association took to a virtual stage on June 3 to unveil the laureate of the 2020 Prix Voltaire which supports defenders of freedom to publish: Liberal Publishing House (Vietnam).

Of the [four remarkable short-listed candidates](#), all brave publishers pushing for the the freedom to publish (from Turkey, Malaysia, Vietnam and Pakistan), the IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee felt Liberal Publishing House stood out as a publishing house which is dedicated to the cause of freedom to publish. The individuals behind Liberal Publishing House have put themselves at great risk in order to enable others to exercise their right to freedom of expression, as the videos submitted to IPA in the name of the laureate show.

Kristenn Einarsson, Chair of the IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee said: *The work of Liberal Publishing House in Vietnam as guerilla publishers, making books available in a climate of intimidation and risk for their own personal safety is nothing short of inspirational. The international publishing community recognizes their bravery and will support them however we can.*

In a recorded video message, Liberal Publishing House's spokesperson Pham Doan Trang, a Vietnamese author and journalist, said: *The men and women who work for the Liberal Publishing House every day risk their safety, their freedom and even their lives altogether just to publish books. The award that we receive today does not just recognize our tireless efforts but it represents the bravery of tens of thousands of Vietnamese readers who have been harassed, who have been arrested and interrogated simply for reading our books.*

You can see the full message [here](#).

The publishing house was founded in February 2019 in Ho Chi Minh City by a group of dissidents as a direct challenge to the Vietnamese government's control of the publishing industry. Through their work, which they are forced to carry out clandestinely due to the government's crackdown on what they consider "anti-state" activity, the voices of Vietnam's growing crop of dissident writers have reached the nation's readers. In Vietnam, such publications are banned by the government and gathered under the name Samizdat – a word describing the illegal copying and distribution of books.

Amnesty International's Vietnam campaign team has pointed out that the police have questioned and at times detained nearly 100 people for either owning or reading books printed by Liberal Publishing House. Despite harassment and intimidation attempts, the 2020 Prix Voltaire winner continues to operate under dangerous conditions, to give hope to the Vietnamese people that any opinion, whether deemed favorable by the government or not, can benefit of the protection of freedom of expression. IPA recognizes the importance of their contribution to this important message and congratulates the laureate for their exemplary dedication and courage.

About the IPA Prix Voltaire

Prix Voltaire nominees are publishers – individuals, groups or organizations – who stand firm on freedom to publish, be it as longstanding defenders of these values or having recently published works despite pressure, threats, intimidation or harassment from various sources.

Previous prize recipients include Egyptian Publisher Khaled Lotfy, Swedish Hong Kong publisher Gui Minhài (2018), Turkish publisher Turhan Günay and publishing house Evrensel, Saudi blogger Raif Badawi (2016) and Belarusian publisher Ihar Lohvinau (2014).

The IPA Prix Voltaire is unique in honouring the freedom to publish, without which many forms of freedom of expression would be impossible. Publishers who provide authors with the tools to disseminate their written ideas assume the same risks as the writers themselves.

Nominees have usually published controversial works amid pressure, threats, intimidation or harassment, be it from governments, other authorities or private interests. Alternatively, they may be publishers with a distinguished record of upholding the values of freedom to publish and freedom of expression. For the purposes of the IPA Prix Voltaire, the definition of 'publisher' is an individual, collective or organization that provides others with the means to share their ideas in written form, including via digital platforms.

The IPA Prix Voltaire, which comes with a CHF 10,000 prize, is made possible by generous contributions from sponsors, all of which are publishing houses and organizations that share the values that the IPA Prix Voltaire recognizes.

The sponsors of the *2020 IPA Prix Voltaire* are, in alphabetical order:

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- [Norstedts](#) (Sweden)

About Liberal Publishing House

Organization name: Nhà xuất bản Tự Do (Vietnamese); Liberal Publishing House (English)

Date of establishment: February 14, 2019

Headquartered in: Vietnam

Founders: authors and editors who wish to remain anonymous

Forms of publication: books & reports

Mission: to promote freedom of information and liberal education in Vietnam **Slogan:** “We write for you to read, (Vietnam).”

Official website: www.nhaxuatbantudo.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nhaxuatbantudo

Twitter: www.twitter.com/nhaxuatbantudo

Email: nhaxuatbantudo@hushmail.com

Spokesperson: Pham Doan Trang, author and journalist

Liberal Publishing House (LPH) is a non-profit organization established February 14, 2019 by a group of domestic activists in Saigon, Vietnam. They are currently the only independent publishing house in the country. In the spirit of “liberal education and freedom of information”, LPH’s primary activities include publishing books free of government censorship, printing and distributing them through either sale or complimentary, public giveaways. Our work includes both hard and electronic copies.

They have slowly expanded the distribution network to cover the entire country, as well as perfected the work of selecting, designing, and editing books. They self-funded their own equipment and machinery to carry out the entirety of their work.

After twelve months of operation, LPH owns two print shops, with each producing approximately 100 books a day. Within eighteen months of operation, LPH has distributed more than 25,000 copies of 18 titles to readers in- and outside Vietnam

LPH exist online:

Official website: www.nhaxuatbantudo.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nhaxuatbantudo

Twitter: www.twitter.com/nhaxuatbantudo

A detailed presentation is available [here](#).