

Even though I accept the principle of “presumption of innocence” in all cases, I still insist that some judgments must be based on trust, not just legal procedures.

Based on a posting on Facebook supposedly written by Lương Ngọc An and an email from the Writers’ Association, we can see that An and the association, where he is an executive committee member, have been unable to resolve this crisis and are actually making it worse.

It will take some time before Lương Ngọc An is either cleared of this charge or made to realize that he must make an apology. In order to lower the heat from “society’s verdict” and uphold the reputation of the newspaper and the Writers’ Association, An should quit his job as deputy editor in chief of *Văn Nghệ* newspaper and resign as an executive committee member of the association.

As the saying goes, “Even if you are neither blind nor lame at seventy years old, don’t get too full of yourself.” Heinous acts from the past may be forgiven if the attitude of the accused indicates that such behavior occurred only in the past. If the association, the newspaper, and An still want to make poetry, they will need to win society’s approval.

11. BÙI HOÀNG TÁM

Translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh

A Comment on the Case by Bùi Hoàng Tám

Originally posted on Facebook by Bùi Hoàng Tám on April 16, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/hoangtam.bui.9/posts/2291950677625936>.

It has been assumed that I “defended” Lương Ngọc An in one of my writings.

But let me state directly: I maintain no connection with An and we have only a passing acquaintance. In fact, I have more memories of Dạ Thảo Phương (although not that many).

Dạ Thảo Phương, the alleged victim of this crime, is a woman, one of the three groups (along with children and the elderly) that I have always protected in my career as a journalist.

If I were to act upon my feelings, I would defend Dạ Thảo Phương.

As I have said before, even if they were committed by my loved ones, there are some crimes that I can't forgive: murder, drug dealing, rape, and especially child abuse.

My first reaction is to note that it is important to stay calm and poised when confronted with unofficial information that does not come from the authorities.

A quick and emotional judgment may lead to a false claim. Even if there is just 0.1 percent chance that the claim is false, it is still wrong to jump to conclusions.

False accusations from North Vietnam's land reform and from the Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm affair have left behind a deep pain that cannot be resolved.

Second, I want to reiterate that the consequences of the accusation may impact LNA's wife and children.

No matter what he did, his loved ones are innocent.

There is value in recalling the sad lesson from Đường Sơn Quán's case, which resulted in the defendant's daughter dying by suicide under public pressure.

Third, I want to underline the importance of respecting the rule of law.

While we are trying very hard to build the rule of law in our country, many people allow emotions to get in the way of the search for a solution. They do not understand that the law is the only "stick" available to protect our people against the authorities.

The rule of law may be thought of as a "golden headband" blocking the power of authorities. The law is not like "a sacred lamp shining a light on injustice." The law also rejects the feudal notion that "a person must die if the king so decrees it."

Indeed, the law is the expression of a country's humanity.

While many have asserted on social media that Lương Ngọc An is guilty, no official determination has been made in the official press. This is right according to the law (a person is guilty only after a verdict has been issued).

I notice that many lawyers follow the same code thanks to their knowledge of the law.

A journalist must not let emotions cause speculation if they don't want to be fired or jailed.

It seems that building a country based upon the rule of law is still very challenging, and the shift from “subjects” to “citizens” must still overcome many obstacles.

12. THÁI HẠO

Translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh

Subsidized Literature

Originally posted on Facebook by Thái Hạo on April 17, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/story.phpstory_fbid=379200590753633&id=100059910855657.

I have seen many questions about and criticisms of the silence of Vietnamese writers and poets regarding the case in which a leader of a literature newspaper has been accused of rape by a female poet. The case has been stirring public opinion for over ten days. I have been paying close attention but have seen very few reactions. Other than a handful of people who have made objective comments from a scientific angle or a rational perspective, the majority keeps silent, afraid to get involved.

To be clear, I am not pushing for one side or the other. You may be on DTP’s side or on LNA’s side or on the side of justice, as long as you do not irrationally attack the other side.

But what I want to focus on here is the large number of observers who remain silent or issue vague pronouncements.

Why is this the case? I think that the practices of subsidized literature are to blame. If our writers and poets could not publish in government newspapers and journals, where would they be? Publishing on Facebook doesn’t cut it. Once there were sites where you could publish outside of Vietnam, like Tiền Vệ or Da Màu. Now they are not so easy to access, and you may fall under suspicion for publishing there. As a result, there is just one “local pond” to swim in, so if you make trouble for others, you know what will happen. Shutting your mouth is a more prudent approach. There is not