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KHMERS KAMPUCHEA-KROM FEDERATION

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

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Written Statement

On behalf of the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF), I would like to bring to your attention regarding to the Human Rights abuses that our unfortunate Khmer-Krom people living in our homeland, Kampuchea-Krom (Southern Vietnam), are facing. They are the poorest of the poor people in Mekong Delta. Their fundamental rights are violated, because of their own safety, they fear to speak up to defend for their rights.

Kampuchea-Krom is the Khmer name for the Mekong Delta and surrounding region of the current state of Viet Nam. The Indigenous Peoples of Kampuchea-Krom are the Khmer-Krom, the ancient descendents of the people of Nokor Phnom (or Funan in the Chinese translation) empire. During colonization of France, Kampuchea-Krom was called Cochin China.

The KKF has brought the Khmer-Krom Human Rights violations to the United Nations in New York and Geneva and provided possible recommendations to the Vietnamese government. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese government still denies having an open dialog with the KKF and has also tried to silence KKF even at the United Nation level. Vietnam launched a vehement campaign to request the member states of ECOSOC not to grant consultative status for KKF even KKF was already granted the special consultative status by the ECOSOC NGO committee on May 22, 2012.

It obviously shows that the voiceless Khmer-Krom people do not have the fundamental rights to live on their ancestral land as briefly discussed below:

Right to Preserve Khmer-Krom Identity and Culture

Vietnamese government continues to erase the identity of Khmer-Krom people as Indigenous Peoples of Mekong Delta. Vietnam forbids the Indigenous Khmer-Krom Peoples to be referred to as “Khmer-Krom” and label them as “Dân Tộc Thiểu Số Khmer” (ethnic minority Khmer).

The false history of the Khmer-Krom is taught in public school. Vietnamese

government does not allow Khmer-Krom to call their village, districts, and provinces in their Khmer language.

From December 2-4, 2011, Vietnam organized the Fifth Festival Culture, Sport and Tourist for the Khmer-Krom to perform to lure tourists into the region. Besides exploiting the culture of the Khmer-Krom for economic benefit, Vietnam forces Khmer-Krom to perform its culture and music that are not based on the Khmer-Krom culture at all. They have to sing a song in both Vietnamese and Khmer and the content of the songs are to thank the Vietnamese government and its communist party. This is clearly a sign of oppression toward a culture. When the Khmer-Krom performed a cultural event about Sen Don-Ta Festival (Pay Respect to their ancestor), the Khmer-Krom performers had to put incense on the altar to pay respect to their ancestors. The Khmer-Krom audiences were shocked and very upset when the picture on the altar was the picture of Ho Chi Minh. It was insulting to the Khmer-Krom because Ho Chi Minh is not the Khmer-Krom's ancestor. Even though they were not happy, they could not complain or seek any recourse because they live in fear. The Fifth Festival of Culture and Sport is nothing more than exploitation and a mockery toward the Khmer-Krom culture.

Right to Learn the International Law

Vietnam adopted the UNDRIP, but the UNDRIP is not allowed to distribute freely in Kampuchea-Krom. Most of the Khmer-Krom don't even know the existence of UNDRIP and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Human Rights workshop to educate Khmer-Krom about their basic rights is not allowed.

Right to Represent and Defend in front of the Vietnamese Legal System

The Khmer-Krom people are living in FEAR on their ancestral land in Vietnam. They are treated as the second class. When the Khmer-Krom people are facing the legal issues, they have no voice in the legal system of Vietnam:

On September 2, 2010, twenty-two Khmer-Krom rubber plantation workers in Tay Ninh province were off work on the **Vietnam's National Day** holiday. They decided to explore a local market in the Vietnamese-populated town. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese locals attacked them because they are Khmer-Krom. Mr. Chau Net, who answered to the Vietnamese mob that he is Khmer-Krom, was murdered right away. Mr. Chau Net's skull was sliced in half by an axe. He was then horrifically beheaded with a Samurai sword. Mr. Chau Phat and Chau Keo were severely injured. Other people managed to escape with minor injury. This is a serious crime against the innocent Khmer-Krom workers, but the Vietnamese authority has not taken any serious actions to arrest the killers to bring them to face justice. Mr. Chau Net's parents were threatened by the government to stop filing complaints to find justice for their son.

Vietnam uses the so called "ethnic minority agency" (Ban Dân Tộc) to represent for the rights of the Khmer-Krom. In reality, this is an agency that Vietnam uses it to

propagate the state's policies and uses the indigenous peoples who work for that agency to oppress its own people if their people stood up for their rights:

Mr. Huynh Ba, a Khmer-Krom land rights activist, led the Khmer-Krom farmers from Soc Trang province to demand returning their confiscated farmlands many times at the ethnic minority agency in Can Tho province. The ethnic minority agency has no power to resolve any issue and threatens the Khmer-Krom farmers to go back to their village or face arrest. Because Mr. Huynh Ba was the leader, he was arrested on May 30, 2009 and released on February 2011 without a free and fair trial. He had no lawyer or right to defend in front of the Vietnamese court. As of today, the confiscated farmlands of the Khmer-Krom farmers have not yet been returned. The Khmer-Krom farmers have nowhere to turn to for justice.

Venerable Danh Tol, Ven. Kim Moul, Ven. Ly Hoang, Ven. Thach Thuong and Ven. Ly Suong were arrested, defrocked, and imprisoned in 2007 because they led a peaceful demonstration to demand the freedom to practice Theravada Buddhism. After being released in February 2009, Ven. Danh Tol and Ven. Kim Moul appealed the Vietnamese government to be re-ordained as Buddhist monks, but they were denied. Vietnamese authorities ordered the Khmer-Krom people who work for the government such as: Mr. Son Song Son, Mr. Thach Kim Sen, and Mr. Lam Ren to bring in Ven. Kim Moul and Danh Tol for prolonged intimidation and integration, depriving them of rest and food. The Khmer-Krom people who serve as "public servants" for the Vietnamese government are puppets who do whatever the government tells them to do. They are scared to speak up for their own people's rights.

Vietnam invited UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay McDougall to visit Vietnam from July 5-15, 2010. According to an official report of Ms. McDougall's trip to Vietnam published on January 21, 2011, the Vietnamese government arranged for her to visit and meet only the ethnic minorities who work for the government, *"during her visit, she was largely confined to meetings arranged by the Government, encountering obstacles that limited opportunities for unaccompanied meetings outside of the presence of Government officials. She therefore does not believe that she had full, free and unfettered access to all parties whom she wished to consult. This impeded her ability to obtain perspectives other than those in consonance with official Government positions"*

Right to Learn and Use Khmer Language

The Indigenous Khmer-Krom Peoples are not allowed freely to learn and use their Khmer language. The current teaching of the Khmer language in public schools attended by Khmer-Krom students is not a program that actually enables Khmer-Krom children to know their mother language. There are no Khmer programs in Primary Public School, where most of the Khmer-Krom children must leave school at the last class to help their parents either in the farm works or as an unskilled worker because of the conditions of poverty in which their families live. From some junior public high schools provide just two to three hours of unreliable programs per week for Khmer-Krom students to learn Khmer, which is not an adequate amount of time to learn any

language. Therefore, most of the young Khmer-Krom now cannot read nor write their own language.

The Vietnamese government forbids the Khmer-Krom from bringing Khmer text books from Cambodia to Vietnam for the Khmer-Krom students to study. In recent years, Vietnam published the Khmer text books for Khmer-Krom students to study. The text books' contents contain propaganda to brainwash the Khmer-Krom students. The text books are written by the Vietnamese who do not know the Khmer language well. Thus, the text books have many grammatical errors and incorrect spelling. This is the reason why the Khmer-Krom students want to study the Khmer text books from Cambodia, which Vietnam does not allow.

Right to Own Land

When the Khmer-Krom people have a dispute with Vietnamese citizens or the Vietnamese government, the Khmer-Krom victims have no right to file complaints to seek justice. When they stand up for their rights, they face imprisonment:

On April 22, 2010, Mrs. Tran Thi Chau was arrested and later sentenced by the Court of Tra Vinh for two and half years in prison. Mrs. Tran Thi Chau had a land-grab dispute with the local authorities at the Nhi Truong market in Nhi Truong village, Cau Ngang district, Tra Vinh province. The authorities arrested her on her way to a wedding and then accused her with the alleged crime of retaking her land.

On March 31, 2011, Mr. Chau Hen was sentenced for two years in prison by the Court of Tri Ton district, An Giang province. Mr. Chau Hen had organized peaceful demonstrations to demand the return of confiscated Khmer-Krom farmlands in the Tri Ton district in 2007 and 2008. Because he led the demonstrations, he was accused of public disturbance and suffered unjust imprisonment.

Recent news from Tra Vinh province (the Mekong Delta), a Khmer Krom local named Mr. Thach Khemerabot reported that since the Vietnamese/Chinese New Year in January, 2012, the price of rice in the Mekong Delta region has outrageously gone down in an unpredictable manner, while the world price of rice has gone up in contrast.

Many poor and helpless Khmer-Krom farmers in the Mekong Delta have historically been relying heavily on their rice production as their main source of income and livelihood and to pay back loans they took during rice plantation season to purchase fertilizers and chemicals.

The Khmer-Krom local farmers have suspected there must be some kind of politically-motivated schemes being carried out by the Hanoi communist regime against the poor and helpless Khmer-Krom local farmers in the Mekong Delta region, so in the end the highly-in-debt Khmer-Krom farmers would have to sell their traditional farmlands to pay down their debts. The local Khmer-Krom farmers have expressed that they are victims in this grand scheme, and have sought international help on stopping this

inhumane and racially-motivated acts against them. They have also expressed grave concern for the future of their children whom might have to drop out of school in order to support their poor family, because their traditional farming businesses unjustly forced out of business by the State.

On International Women Day—March 8, 2012, Mrs. Neang Sen, a Khmer-Krom woman from An Giang province has expressed grave concerns over helpless and abject poverty due to loss of her ancestral land to the Vietnamese authorities' extortion scheme during the period 1979 to 1983, when Mrs. Neang Sen's families and the Khmer-Krom villagers were forced out to live in Hau Giang province instead. On their return to hometown few years later, Mrs. Neang Sen and others learned that their farmlands and properties have been confiscated by the Vietnamese authorities and Vietnamese newcomers and to this day their calls for return of their lands receive no response from the Vietnamese authorities. Not only their calls for justice have been ignored, but Mrs. Neang Sen and villagers have accused for disturbing public order and being discriminated as unruly and second-class citizens by the Vietnamese authorities.

Right to be Free from Torture

After living in fear and oppression, Ven. Danh Tol and Ven. Kim Moul escaped Vietnam to seek refugee status in Thailand via Cambodia. They were granted asylum status to live in Sweden in September 2009. When they reached to the free world, they told their stories about how they were treated and tortured by the Vietnamese police and guards while in prison.

Mr. Chau Hen used to be a healthy person. After being arrested and imprisoned, he has been tortured and has not been allowed to speak to his wife when she visits.



Mr. Chau Hen was leg cuffed at a hospital when he was sick

Right to Travel from and to Their Ancestral Land

The Khmer-Krom people have to ask for permission if they need to travel within

Vietnam or abroad:

On October 29, 2011, Venerable Ly Le in Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province, asked permission to travel to Cambodia, but the Vietnamese government refused, alleging the crime of being caught while talking online with the Khmer-Krom abroad on April 23, 2011.

Venerable Soeun Ty, a Khmer-Krom Buddhist monk, had left his family in Soc Trang province to live in Cambodia in 2003 and became a Cambodian citizen in 2004. On May 27, 2010, he went back to visit his parents. The Vietnamese police seized his Cambodian passport and subjected him to a full day of interrogation.

To closely monitor the Khmer-Krom visiting Vietnam from abroad, Vietnam requires the Khmer-Krom visitors to register with the local authority where they visit. The Vietnamese authority even sends police to “visit” the Khmer-Krom visitors making them feel uncomfortable and concerned for their safety. Those who do not register with the local authorities are fined. Mr. Tran Van Lyo, a Khmer-Krom from California was fined one million two hundred fifty thousand Dong (about 50 US dollar) on December 10, 2010 because he forgot to register with the local authority when he visited his hometown in Travin province.

On November 8, 2011, while visiting Cambodia, Ms. Thach Bopha from the United States wanted to go to Vietnam to visit her relatives. She went to apply for a visa at the Vietnamese Embassy in Cambodia. She was totally shocked when a staff at the embassy told her that the embassy cannot issue visa for her because of her Khmer-Krom last name, **Thach**.

On March 22, Mr. Son Subert, an adviser to the King of Cambodia, and his friends were stopped at the border and not allowed to enter Vietnam even they had Visa issued by the Vietnamese Embassy in Cambodia. Mr. Son Subert planned to travel to Vietnam and visit his relatives in Preah Trapeang (Tra Vinh) province.

On April 12, 2013, Mr. Ly Chhuon, an Editor-in-Chief of the PreyNokorNews magazine in Cambodia, his wife and his daughter left Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to visit his relatives in Kampuchea-Krom (Mekong Delta) during the Cambodian New Year. His family wants to celebrate Cambodian New Year with his relatives in his homeland. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese authority detained them for three days and then deported them back to Cambodia.

Right to Freely Practice Theravada Buddhism

Practice Theravada Buddhism in Fear

The Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and followers of Theravada Buddhism must use caution when worshipping in the Kampuchea-Krom region. The Vietnamese government has embedded their agents inside of Khmer-Krom temples to monitor and

report all the activities of monks and followers. The purpose of this surveillance is to ensure that all Khmer-Krom temples are following the stringent orders that the Patriotic United Buddhist Association (PUBA) has ruled.

These agents are monks, and high-ranking members of the temple, such as Abbots and Head Monks, most of them are forced to do so under duress. These operatives are pressured to accept these monitoring positions because of political pressure or financial gain. Whether or not employed under duress, they receive a monthly salary from the government; this act alone defies several of the most central Buddhist beliefs. Knowing that spies are constantly watching, **the Khmer-Krom Buddhists now practice their religion in fear.**

Though most of these spies involuntarily work for the government, some have been more than happy to take advantage of this system of control. Vietnam allows the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks to become members of Congress. Such is the case of Venerable Thach Houll, who after being elected, had no qualms oppressing his own fellow Buddhist monks. In addition, he serves as a mouthpiece for governmental propaganda. It is officials like Ven. Thach Houll who maintain the image of “religious freedom” in Vietnam while covering the constant suppressions of indigenous peoples.

The Khmer-Krom monk students in the Pali school in Soc Trang province are being monitored particularly heavily. They must report wherever they go. Moreover, all the foreigners who come to this school are monitored heavily. In September 2010, a Buddhist delegation from Thailand was not allowed to visit this school without a proper explanation.

The Theravada Buddhist monks and followers are afraid to speak freely. Those who have expressed interest in their rights to freely practice as they wish quickly cease for fear of being arrested.

Imprisonment for demanding Religious Freedom

Since Kampuchea-Krom has been taken, the Khmer-Krom monks have peacefully demonstrated in order to restore their manner of worship. These non-violent protests lead to unjust arrests. The Vietnamese government cites these arrests as “Disturbing the Vietnamese Society” and “Involving with Anti-Vietnamese Government Activities” as stated under Articles 87 and 88 of the Vietnamese Penal Code.

Despite being formally disbanded, the Khmer-Krom Buddhists have continued to rally together in order to protect their rights to practice religion in a traditional manner. They have peacefully protested and have attempted to further their religious studies; however, governmental authorities have prevented this expression of free speech and religion. They have stemmed protests with military force, and restricted the transfer of information between Khmer-Krom localities.

One example of suppression of protestors occurred on February 8, 2007. A non-violent demonstration took place in front of the Pali School in Soc Trang. The purpose of this

protest was for the Khmer-Krom community to regain their rights to form an independent religious organization, to perform ceremonies as defined by religious and cultural customs, and to practice Buddhism without interference from the Vietnamese government. Over two hundred Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks participated in the protest.

The peaceful demonstrators were met with fresh waves of oppression. The Vietnamese authorities used military force to demobilize them. Ultimately, nine monks were arrested, forced to disrobe, and detained. Five of them, Ven. Kim Moul, Ven. Danh Tol, Ven. Ly Suong, Ven. Thach Thuong, and Ly Hoang, were sentenced from two to four years of imprisonment without a fair trial. The remaining monks have been placed under temple arrest and are subjected to daily interrogation and heavy surveillance even to this day. Some of them escaped to Cambodia and Thailand.

In addition to restricting free speech, the Vietnamese government has prevented freedom of religious practice. Because PUBA has replaced all of the other religious associations in the region, the Khmer-Krom have limited methods by which they can learn traditional Khmer-Krom Buddhism. They must rely on information from abroad. Therefore, the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks want to study in Cambodia or Thailand and really want to listen to foreign news stations in order to receive information from Khmer-Krom brethren in other nations.

An exemplary case was that of Thach Sophon, a former Khmer-Krom Buddhist monk, defrocked on July 22, 2010. He was arrested by the Vietnamese government on July 29, 2010, for the alleged crimes of sending Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks to study abroad without permission from the Vietnamese government, and for accessing “restricted information” via satellite to listen to the news about Khmer-Krom living abroad. He was released on September 27, 2010 and then remained under house-arrest for another nine months.

Recent Arrested of Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and Khmer-Krom Buddhist followers

On March 26, 2013, the Vietnamese authority summoned representatives of ninety two Khmer-Krom Buddhist temples in Soc Trang province to attend a meeting at the “*Political School of Soc Trang*”. The summoned letter was sent to all Khmer-Krom temples in Soc Trang province just a day before the meeting. The Vietnamese Authority used this meeting and tactics to intimidate, harass, and threaten the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks and committee members of Khmer-Krom temples in Soc Trang province for exercising their rights and for standing up to demand for freedom of religion and their religious belief.

The Vietnamese authority accused Venerable Thach Thuol for contacting the Khmer-Krom media and Khmer Krom living abroad to provide information about human rights violations against the Khmer-Krom. Venerable Lieu Ny was accused of not obeying the Vietnamese authority to defrock Venerable Thach Thoul by force. Additionally, Venerable Lieu Ny was ordered to resign as the Abbot of Ta Set temple in Vinh Hai village, Vinh Chau District, Soc Trang province.

The freedom of opinion and expression of Ven. Thach Thuol has been violated merely because he was contacted and interviewed by the Voice of Khmer-Krom "VOKK" and the Khmer-Krom living abroad. The Vietnamese authority keeps oppressing the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks at Ta Set temple, because these monks have refused to join the Patriotic United Buddhist Association (PUBA - Hội Đoàn Kết Sư Sãi Yêu Nước).

The Vietnamese authority has threatened to defrock Ven. Ly Chanda at Prey Chop temple, Lai Hoa commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province.

On April 12, 2013, Mr. Ly Chhuon, the Editor-in-Chief of the PreyNokorNews magazine in Cambodia, his wife and his daughter left Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to visit his relatives in Kampuchea-Krom (Mekong Delta) during the Cambodian New Year. His family wants to celebrate Cambodian New Year with his relatives in his homeland.

When Mr. Ly Chhuon and his family arrived at the border of Cambodia and Vietnam, they were not allowed to enter Vietnam and had been detained and searched by the Vietnamese custom officers. They have been interrogated.

There were many cases that the Khmer-Krom living abroad had been issued the Visa to visit their relatives in Mekong Delta, but when they arrived at the Ho Chi Minh airport or at the border checkpoints, they were denied the entry to Vietnam.

On May 13, 2013, at 4pm local time, the Vietnamese polices of Soc Trang province arrested three Khmer-Krom women at Prey Chop commune, Lai Hoa village, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province. These women are:

1. Mrs Lam Thi Xang Lan, born 1957
2. Mrs. Ly Thi Danh, born 1970
3. Mrs. Ly Thi Sa Bon, born 1965

Mrs. Lam Thi Xang Lan and Mrs. Ly Thi Danh were arrested at their home and taken to imprison in Soc Trang province. Mrs. Ly Thi Sa Bon was summoned, arrested, and imprisoned at the prison of Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province. The Vietnamese authority arrested the above three Khmer-Krom women because they supported Venerable Ly Chanh Da. They did not want Vietnamese authority to defrock Ven. Ly Chanh Da because he does not violate any Buddhist rules.

On May 14, 2013, The Patriotic United Buddhist Association (PUBA - Hội Đoàn Kết Sư Sãi Yêu Nước) which is a Buddhist organization controlled by the Vietnamese government issued an Announcement (Số: 01/TB-HĐKSSYN) to defrock three Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks who practice Theravada Buddhism:



1. Venerable Lieu Ny, born 1986, at Ta Set temple, Vinh Hai commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province;
2. Venerable Thach Thuol, born 1985, at Ta Set temple, Vinh Hai commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province;
3. Ven. Ly Chanh Da, born 1988, at Prey Chop Temple, Lai Hoa commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province.

On May 16, 2013, Venerable Ly Chanh Da was arrested, defrocked, detained and tortured. He was forced to confess his alleged crimes on the Vietnamese Television.

The latest information from the villagers of Ta Set commune has revealed that Venerable Thach Thuol and Lieu Ny and two other persons, Thach Phum Rich and Thach Tha have been apprehended by Vietnamese Authorities on the evening of 20 May 2013. Their where about location and condition are unknown at this point.

Right to Education

The Khmer-Krom children are not able to learn the rights of the child, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in their Khmer language. The Khmer-Krom children are not allowed to study their true history in their language.

There are no magazines or booklets in the Khmer language, for Khmer-Krom youth to express their opinions that are independently produced without the interference of the Vietnamese government. Khmer-Krom youth who are in high school have very limited access to public forums to express their opinion, especially on the internet.

The Khmer-Krom people are hard-working farmers but some of them do not even have enough rice to eat because the expenses of farming are too high. The Khmer-Krom people are the poorest people in the Mekong Delta region. The poverty of the Khmer-Krom affects the livelihoods of the Khmer-Krom youth and their future. In recent years, the percentages of Khmer-Krom students dropping out of school are alarming. They have to help their parents on the farm or look for employment to help their

families make ends meet. Without education, the future of Khmer-Krom youth is bleak.

There are millions of Khmer-Krom people in Kampuchea-Krom, but very few hold a Master Degree or Ph.D. Vietnam has sent thousands of Vietnamese students to study abroad, especially in the United States, Canada, and Australia. But the Khmer-Krom students do not receive those benefits.

Khmer-Krom students receive no benefit from scholarships that are generously offered by international governments and organizations due to the repressive policies of the Vietnamese government. Outside efforts to support the Khmer-Krom advancement of education is blocked because the government of Vietnam ties these efforts to political motives.

Right to Freedom of Expression, Press and Information

All the media in Vietnam is controlled by the government to propagate the state's policies. There is no independent newspaper, magazine or television. The Vietnamese government even blocks the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation Website (<http://www.khmerkrom.org> or <http://www.khmerkrom.net>) in Vietnam.

On January 8, 2012, A Khmer-Krom man (who has asked to remain unnamed for fear of his own safety) in Tra Vinh province told VOKK that the Vietnamese authorities ordered him to take down his Satellite dish because he watches television program broadcasts from Cambodia. He refused to take it down because he just wants to watch cultural programs from Cambodia. He's urged the international community and the Khmer-Krom in Vietnam to protect the basic right to receive information.

Since the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monk students of a Pali school in Khleang (Soc Trang) province organized a peaceful protest to demand for their rights to practice their Theravada Buddhism in 2007, the Khmer-Krom students are not allowed to talk to the foreigners because the government scared the foreigners who represent for the foreign Embassies in Vietnam or foreign reporters come to find out the truth about the living situation of the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monk students.

On March 20, 2012, ten Khmer-Krom locals of **Hoa Lac B** hamlet, **Binh Phu** commune, **Cang Long** district, **Tra Vinh** province have been summoned to the district office and the whole province of Tra Vinh has been harassed and intimidated by the Vietnamese authorities and the spy agents on ground that the Khmer-Krom locals have been using satellite-TV receivers to receive TV signals from Cambodia. The Cambodia's TV signals broadcast Khmer cultural shows and Theravada Buddhist teaching directly from Cambodia which are of great interests to the Khmer-Krom locals in the Mekong Delta who have tried to revive Khmer-Krom identity under the Hanoi's repressive regime. The Vietnamese authorities have just issued a ban to the locals that they will be fined \$200-to-\$300 per person and/or face with jail term if any they ignore the State's order.

Right to Form Association

Vietnam does not allow Khmer-Krom to form any association. Throughout Mekong Delta, there is neither independently Khmer-Krom association nor Khmer-Krom student club.

The Khmer-Krom people have two traditional sports: Dragon Boat Racing and Ox Racing. Vietnam just allows them to organize the teams for competition to lure the tourist to bring benefits for the government. These sport teams are under heavily monitored by the local authorities.

Right to Health

Vietnam has ratified three international conventions that explicitly guarantee the right to health: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most of the Khmer-Krom people do not know of the existence of those international conventions. They do not understand that the health problems they face are human rights violations.

Since 2003, the blindness issues of the Khmer-Krom in Soc Trang province are still prevalent. There are thousands of Khmer-Krom people who are affected by blindness of either the left or right eye, and in some case both eyes. The main problems that cause the blindness are from contaminated drinking water from their surroundings which are largely polluted by pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. This problem has been reported to the Vietnamese government, but the Vietnamese government has taken no actions about it because the victims are primarily Khmer-Krom.



Blind victims in Soc Trang and Bac Lieu provinces

Vietnam claims that it provides free healthcare services to the ethnic minority populations, but the free healthcare service is not really free as the government claims. In order to receive a free Health Insurance card, the Khmer-Krom must be from a Khmer-Krom family that is categorized as “Hộ Nghèo” which means a “household poverty”. When they are sick, they go to the hospital and are treated as “second-class citizens” because they only pay about 5% of the total bills. Thus, despite the claim of free healthcare, they still face charges and discrimination. Some Khmer-Krom patients cannot even afford to pay that 5% and end up selling their farmlands or worthy belongings in order to get the treatment or receive the medication.

If the Khmer-Krom families are not categorized as a household poverty, their family

members have to buy insurance. The Khmer-Krom people are poorest people in the Mekong Delta region. They barely make enough money to have food for their family. Thus, most of them do not have insurance. When they are sick, they go to the local hospital in their village. Some diseases cannot be treated by the doctors at the local hospital and they are sent to the hospital in the City, but many Khmer-Krom patients cannot afford the treatments and die as a result.

Weight Loss Abnormally of Khmer-Krom Workers at a Cashew Factory

There is a cashew factory called, Nong Gia 2, at Chau Lang village, Tri Ton district, An Giang province. There are about 400 workers working in this factory and most of them are Khmer-Krom. The working condition in this factory is horrible that is why only Khmer-Krom workers working there because they need a job to earn money to support their family.

According to a woman who has her sons working for that cashew factory, the workers have to start working around 7am and finish their work around 6pm or 7pm. The workers work at least 11 hours a day, but they only make about \$100 a month. Whoever get sick and cannot come to work, they are fined about \$1 for each sick day. If they are sick more than three days, they are fired.

Besides working long hours every day, the Khmer-Krom workers also expose to the bad smell from the cashew. The Khmer-Krom workers told their parents and relatives that they usually have bad sinus, coughing, and keep losing weight. They are all very skinny and their faces look pale. Because of scaring losing their job and do not have money to see Doctors, the Khmer-Krom workers do not know what kind of disease that they are having.

Khmer-Krom Women Face Double Discrimination

The Khmer-Krom women face many obstacles in all facets of the Vietnamese society. Institutionalized discrimination and lack of access to education keep Khmer Krom women in gendered roles with little opportunity to advance up the social and economic ladder.

The Khmer-Krom women participating in peaceful protests have been beaten with electric baton and interrogated for watching human rights related activities. In 2008, a young Khmer-Krom woman, Mrs. Neang Savong helped her father, Mr. Chau In, to lead the Khmer-Krom farmers to demand returning confiscated farmlands in An Giang province. She was beaten by Vietnamese police and got sick after that. She was discriminated and ignored for her treatment at the Vietnamese hospital in Tri Ton district and Sai Gon city. Unfortunately, she passed away on Saturday, September 25, 2010.



Mrs. Neang Ni injured after an electric baton was used to silence her protests to demand returning her confiscated farm land in 2008.

The lack of job opportunities in the provincial region has meant Khmer Krom girls have been forced to travel outside of their region and become victims of trafficking rings. A 20 year old Khmer-Krom woman, Mrs. Thach Thi Hong Ngoc left a poor village in Can Tho province to look for work in Saigon city. She fell into the arranged married trap to marry a Korean man, Jang Du Hyo, 47 years old, without knowing anything about him. She married him to get \$500 for her family and left to live with him in Korea. Unfortunately, on July 8, 2010, shortly after her arrival in Korea, she was killed by her Korean husband. The Vietnamese government just media reports that she was a Vietnamese girl, not a Khmer-Krom girl.

The Khmer-Krom people are living in POVERTY and FEAR. They mentality believe that they are just the second citizen in Vietnam. Whatever they demand, it would never be heard and might cause them to be imprisoned for just standing up for their fundamental rights.

In this regards, the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation would like to ask for your support to urge Vietnam to:

- Respect the Khmer-Krom identity and culture. The Indigenous Khmer-Krom people should be allowed to refer to themselves as "Khmer-Krom". The Vietnamese government should stop using Khmer-Krom as puppet performers to entertain tourists for the Vietnamese government's benefit. Khmer-Krom history should be taught in public schools. The name of villages, districts and provinces where the Khmer-Krom people are living should converted back to their original Khmer names.
- **Unconditionally release Venerable Lieu Ny, Venerable Thach Thuol, Thach Phum Rich and Thach Tha.**
- **Be held accountable for the torture of Venerable Lieu Ny and Venerable Thach Thuol.**
- Stop and eliminate all forms of arbitrary summons, arrests, detention, torture and confession by force of the alleged crimes that Vietnam allegedly accuses Khmer-Krom of, just like Vietnam did to Ven. Ly Chanh Da of Prey Chop temple.
- Be reminded that religious freedom is a right, not a privilege granted by government.
- Allow the Khmer-Krom to have basic freedoms so they are not living in fear. They should be allowed to freely defend themselves in front of the Vietnamese judicial system. The Vietnamese government should stop accusing Khmer-Krom people of "disturbing the Vietnamese society" using Article 87 of Vietnam's Penal Code to imprison them whenever they stand up for their fundamental rights.
- Ratify the Convention Against Torture so Vietnamese police do not use torture against prisoners.
- Provide a political environment to allow the people in Vietnam to freely exercise their rights to vote for the people and party that they want without interference from the government.

- Stop using Khmer-Krom officers who work for the government to oppress their own people. The Khmer-Krom officers should represent the Khmer-Krom to raise their voice and protect their rights.
- Allow Khmer-Krom to travel abroad freely and stop monitoring and sending police to intimidate Khmer-Krom who come from abroad to visit their relatives in Vietnam.
- Allow Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks to create an independent religious organization free from interference from the government. Allow Khmer-Krom to freely practice their Theravada Buddhism. They should not have to ask for permission to practice or even just to organize a simple Buddhist ritual. Remind Vietnam that religious freedom is a right, not a privilege granted by government.
- Allow Khmer-Krom to have freedom of press, freedom of expression, and freedom of belief. Also allow the freedom to organize the associations that are already stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (and even in Vietnam's constitution).
- Strengthen the pro-poor health policies to ensure that all Khmer-Krom people have access to quality health services.
- Implement policies and legislation to protect Khmer-Krom girls and provide active educational campaigns and informational sessions in both Vietnamese and Khmer so that they can be better informed of the danger of human trafficking.
- Allow the Khmer-Krom children to freely study their native language in public schools starting from kindergarten. The Khmer language should be recognized as an official language in Kampuchea-Krom. All applications including forms, signs and legal documents should be written in both Khmer and Vietnamese.
- Establish an Independent International Human Rights Institution that would work with the State party. Through this institution, the Indigenous Peoples, especially the Khmer-Krom, would be able to address their concerns and needs. The institution would also serve as an ideal place for the wide dissemination of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the further steps that are required.