

Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Item 10: Dialogue with the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
with regard to indigenous human rights defenders
Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation & Kampuchea-Krom Temple
Speaker: Minh Dung Tran

Madam Chair,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak today. The indigenous Khmer Krom people, in particular our Khmer Krom Buddhist monks play a vital in the preservation and continuation our cultural identity and heritage. We agree with chair of EMRIP. Our monks are our human rights defenders. However, their role in defending our lands and culture continue to be undermined by Vietnam. Often, for simple practicing their culture they face arrest, torture and even disappearances.

Two of our cultural defenders, Venerable Thach Thuol and Lieu Ny are imprisoned for exercising their basic right to preserve our indigenous language. Our sacred land surrounding our temples stand unprotected in the face of increasing occupation by local Vietnamese settlers. For example, the recent case of Me Pang Temple highlights an urgent need for indigenous people to have greater access to knowledge and assistance from local and international community in regards to land titles and protection of their cultural heritage sites.

We would like to suggest the following recommendations:

- Seek the help of the Permanent Forum and EMRIP to conduct a study to determine the status of recognition of Ips around the global, in particular in Asia where there is little to no legal recognition.
- We are also pleased that EMRIP will invite NHRIs. Unfortunately in the state we inhabit there is no NHRI. We ask that Vietnam establishes a national human rights institution in Kampuchea-Krom in partnership and cooperation with KKF, a peaceful organization that has been actively promoting the human rights of its indigenous peoples for over a decade so that they could fully participate in all decision making processes affecting their culture, social and economic status without fear or discrimination.

- Seek the help of UNESCO in collaboration with indigenous peoples translate UNDRIP into the native languages of the indigenous people and help create capacity building projects on the ground, and to help increase awareness of UNDRIP through the use of social media such as Facebook and twitter. The implementation of UNDRIP is only successful if the indigenous peoples themselves are aware of it.
- Seek the help of UNICEF and UNEP help initiate projects which will help distribute climate change information and awareness, such as: posters, leaflets, magazines, in the Khmer language to the Khmer-Krom, especially the Khmer-Krom children, living in the area near the ocean. Climate education holds the key for prevention and preparation for this terrifying phenomenon.