

Thirteen Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item 4: Human Rights

(b) Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Joint Statement of Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation

and Khmer Kampuchea Krom Temple

Speaker: Thi Sothy Kien

Madame Chairperson,

We would like to congratulate Madame Victoria Tauli-Corpuz for being elected the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and we look forward to having your visit to ancestral lands in Kampuchea-Krom in the near future.

Unrecognized by the government of Vietnam, our Khmer-Krom people continue to remain in the dark about the importance of UNDRIP in protecting their culture, identity, language and livelihood.

Our basic indigenous right to culture and identity continue to be oppressed. Around this time last year, several of our spiritual leaders including Venerable Ly Chanh Da, Abbot of Prey Chop temple was beaten and defrocked twice without ceremony for wanting to start Khmer classes within his temple. Four of his supporters who were beating drums to alert villagers of the defrocking were sentenced to 10 months to 1 year imprisonment. They remain in prison today.

Another our spiritual leader, Venerable Thach Thuol is currently serving 6 years prison sentence for wanting to start Khmer language classes. Venerable Lieu Ny, Abbot of Tra Set temple is serving 4 years prison for refusing to allow Vietnam to use our sacred Theravada Buddhism as a political tool to silence of our biggest defenders of our Khmer-Krom identity and religion, our Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks.

We would like recommend the following:

1. Ask a member of the Human Rights Council, we ask Vietnam to extend an invitation of UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to visit Kampuchea-Krom within the next 6 months.
2. Request Vietnam respect our right as an indigenous organization representing our voiceless Khmer-Krom people. It is important to allow us to self identify and include us as Indigenous Peoples and not Ethnic Minority.
3. Seek the help of UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples to ask that all governments, especially Vietnam to create an Indigenous Peoples Institution that is ran by indigenous Khmer-Krom people so that they could fully participate in all decision making processes affecting their culture, social and economic status without fear or discrimination.
4. 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.
5. Ask Vietnam to immediate release all eight Khmer-Krom human rights defenders from prison and recognize that they were simply exercising the right to preserve their culture and identity.
6. Reaffirm to Vietnam that the recognition of Khmer-Krom as the indigenous peoples within its border is crucial to the successful implementation of UN DRIP.
7. As a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, it is our sincere hope that Vietnam not only respects the human rights of all peoples living in Vietnam but realize that only through an open and

peaceful dialogue can we can start the process of reconciliation and recognition of our right as indigenous people of the Mekong Delta and its surround areas. Only through such recognition will Vietnam be truly respected by our Khmer-Krom people and the international community. On the occasion of our 10th anniversary here at UNPFII, will Vietnam accept the hand of peace and partnership with KKF so we can begin the recognition of Khmer-Krom as the ancestral owners of Kampuchea-Krom?

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