



Council of Indigenous Peoples in Today's Vietnam

(An Agglomeration of 30 Nations: The Cham, Khmer-Krom, and Montagnards)

Freedom – Justice -- Peace

STATEMENT

at

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ninth Session

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Speaker: Mr. Thach, Tan Dara, CIP-TVN President

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Mr. Chair,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country grouping 54 different ethnicities among which the Khmer-Krom, Cham, and Montagnards, all 30 nations, are the native peoples living on their respective ancestral land before the arrival of Vietnamese expansionist beginning in 11th century. These native populations had lived peacefully in their bounded territories and gotten along well with their neighbors until this excursion began. When the French arrived in 1859, the Vietnamese expansion stopped for a while, then liberation war began until the fall of the Saigon regime in 1975. The present Socialist Republic of Vietnam proceeded to ignore the status quo; governed by absolute force and vengeance, and discrimination by past association. Confiscation of innocent indigenous properties was the main tool to destroy their social, cultural, religious, and family system that eventually brought them down to their knees. This policy has finally transformed these native peoples into a group of ethnic proletariat in accordance with the Marxism and Leninism adopted by the Hanoi regime until today.

Deprived of arable land and confronted with no other alternative resources, the Khmer-Krom, Cham, and Montagnards people who depend totally on the product of their lands to survive now must leave

their village, sell their ancestral lands at a cheap price in order to make both ends meet, or to avoid prosecution. They have been condemned to poverty, hopelessness, and misery. To say the least, most of these people have no access to employments, healthcare, financial support, and/or educational facility for their children. In fact, there have almost no indigenous students being allowed to go abroad for higher education, especially, in the United States, and European countries.

According to the census made in 2014 by the Vietnamese authorities, the population of Khmer-Krom counts approximately 1.2 individuals; Cham approximately 160 000 and the Montagnards more than one million. 75% of them are poor, illiterate, and unemployed

In our case, the Item 8 calls for “The best practices and strategies for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” is not applicable until Vietnam recognizes us as indigenous peoples. It is an absolute prerequisite before the implementation of the Document can take place. Therefore, the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Today’s Vietnam would like to make the following recommendations to the Vietnam government:

- 1). Officially recognize the Khmer-Krom, Cham, and Montagnards as indigenous peoples so that the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples may begin;
- 2). Grant these indigenous peoples with the right to self-determination and self-governance on the economic, social, and cultural plans in accordance with the article 3 and 4 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- 3). Return to the Khmer-Krom, Cham, and Montagnards people all their private or public lands which have been illegally seized or confiscated by the authorities of Hanoi since 1975.

Thank you very much for your attention.