

14th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Item 8: Draft Report on efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Self-Determination
Organization: Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation
Speaker: Priscilla Kim Ong

Thank you Chairperson.

Since the adoption of UNDRIP in 2007, Vietnam has not implemented any concrete actions to recognize our Khmer-Krom peoples as the Indigenous Peoples of the Mekong Delta and its surrounding regions. In fact, our basic right to learn about UNDRIP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is met with questioning, intimidation and arrests.

How can we achieve self-determination if countries do not promote or respect our right to determine our future?

It is time that member states like Vietnam, put our people first. Instead of intimidation and arrests for printing the UNDRIP, we ask that Vietnam empower and support us in our right to exercise basic fundamental freedoms and the right to self-determination as enshrined in the Article 3 & 4 of the UNDRIP.

Seek the help of EMRIP and the mandate of the Permanent Forum on IPs to conduct a study to determine the recognition status of the indigenous peoples such as our Khmer-Krom people. By recognizing the Khmer-Krom as indigenous peoples, the fundamental rights enshrined in the UNDRIP would provide the Khmer-Krom with the ability to lay claim to their ancestral lands to not only support their traditional livelihood of farming but allow them the right to protect their culture and identity

We ask that Vietnam specifically support and recognize our right to self-identify as Khmer-Krom and in general as indigenous through the development and implementation of a national action plan in respect to Article 2 of the UNDRIP.

Land is life. Our access to food security is hindered by a lack of legal systems within Vietnam's laws to protect our Khmer-Krom farmers. In fact, COVID 19 has increased the financial hardships of our farmers, and those seeking to demand for the return of land were met with electric batons and tear gas. On June 8, 2021, one of these Khmer-Krom farmers, Mr. Dep Huynh, was arrested and imprisoned with a two-year sentence.

We ask that Vietnam release Mr. Dep Huynh and drop the charges on the other Khmer-Krom farmers who have been sentenced to prison for simply trying to make a living on their own land. They should be able to exercise Articles 3, 5 and 7 without fear or intimidation.

We affirm the need for Vietnam to develop a national human rights institution and other effective mechanisms to protect our Khmer-Krom farmers as enshrined in Article 8. They are the backbone of Vietnam's economy.

We call on Vietnam to genuinely implement the UNDRIP to ensure that the Khmer-Krom people can exercise their rights to self-determination, particularly their right to free trial and equal protection. They should also create mechanisms to provide access to legal processes for Khmer-Krom in cases where there is a violation of their rights.

Thank You