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Special Report on Torture against the Indigenous Khmer-Krom in Vietnam and Cambodia

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Foreword

Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) is a non-profit organization and a member of UNPO, representing the million Khmer Krom of the Mekong Delta (south Vietnam) and Khmer Krom around the world. We, KKF, would like to present the following cases to the UN's Committee on Torture. The cases were in clear violation of Khmer Krom human rights and they were grossly committed by both repressive regimes: Vietnam and Cambodia.

The Use of Force and the Use of Torture against the Peaceful Khmer Krom Buddhist Monks in Khleang (Soc Trang) province, south Vietnam

On February 8, 2007, a peaceful demonstration was taken place in front of the Pali School in Khleang (renamed Soc Trang) province, Vietnam, and was organized by the local Khmer Krom Buddhist monks to demand for religious freedom. A few days after the protest, the Vietnam military forces were deployed to the surrounding Khmer Krom temples and forced numerous Khmer Krom Buddhist monks to violently defrock on site. Many defrocked Khmer Krom monks were immediately arrested and tortured in order to fabricate more confessions.

The five monks who were accused as being the protest organizers, were violently defrocked and tortured by the Vietnamese authorities. They were Venerable Danh Tol, Venerable Kim Moeun, Venerable Ly Hoang, Venerable Ly Suong and Venerable Thach Thuong during the time of incarceration. The five Venerables were later sentenced to 2 to 4 years of imprisonment without a legal representation. Among the arrested there were also Venerable Thach Ratana and Thach Minh Thi and both were only 17 years old at the time of arrest.

The torturing methods that were used by the Vietnamese authorities against the above-mentioned Khmer Krom monk victims were gruesome and unimaginable. Venerable Danh Tol and Venerable Kim Moeun both had fled homeland after their release and now are residents of Sweden. Both have lived to re-tell their brutal experiences of the torturing methods whereby the Vietnamese torturers placed them in a tiny, dark, extreme hot temperature unit with thorny walls so they could not move around at all and they had to stand in there for days and nights. They both occasionally passed out due to the extreme conditions of the units. Many times during the interrogations, the five venerables were punched in the stomach, in the ribs, and on the head by the Vietnamese interrogators and they passed out again and again. The Vietnamese interrogators also used racially-offended languages to scold at the Khmer Krom victims. The worst of all methods was the use of chemical injections to destroy the victims' mind. To this day, the mental state of the five monks is still being psychologically affected by those chemical injections. They all described that they still forget things a lot and very confused and nervous, despite that they are now only around 30 years old and all were healthy before.

The Killing of Venerable Eang Sok Theoun in Cambodia

In response to the injustice in homeland, the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks living in Cambodia organized a peaceful demonstration in front of the Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh capital on 27th February 2007. The case of the Venerable Eang Sok Theoun, 32 years old, was found dead with his throat slit while residing in a temple in Kandal province, Cambodia. His death came just hours after participating at the peaceful demonstration to demand the release of his fellow Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks in Soc Trang province, Mekong Delta.

The Cambodia authority prohibited the investigation of Venerable Eang Sok Theoun's case. His body was buried at 3 A.M by the Cambodia local authorities. The Cambodia authorities even prohibited Venerable Eang Sok Theoun's family and his fellow Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks in Cambodia from organizing a formal Buddhist funeral service for him.

The Case of Venerable Tim Sakhorn in Cambodia and in south Vietnam

On June 30, 2007, Venerable Tim Sakhorn a former head monk in Temple Kirivong Takeo was summoned to meet the head monk of the Takeo province at Takeo city, Cambodia. Venerable Tim Sakhorn is a Khmer Krom descent. After the meeting, the Cambodia authorities and the provincial head monk accused Venerable Tim Sakhorn of using his temple as a place "to propagate activities that divide the diplomatic relationship between Cambodia and Vietnam" as stated in the letter used to defrock Venerable Tim Sakhorn by Supreme Patriarch Tep Vong. After the abrupt defrocking, Venerable Tim Sakhorn was disappeared without trace. The spokesman of the Cambodia's Information Ministry issued news that the whereabouts of Venerable Tim Sakhorn under an undisclosed location. The spokesman of the Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh, Mr. Trinh Ba Cam denied any knowledge of Venerable Tim Sakhorn's whereabouts after his disappearance from Cambodia.

On August 1, 2007, Vietnam authority finally admitted that it had arrested Venerable Tim Sakhorn for attempting to enter its borders illegally. However, instead of accusing Venerable Tim Sakhorn for the initial crime, Vietnam accused him for the crime of "Sabotaging the unification policy" under article 87 of Vietnam's Penal Code.

On November 8, 2007, The People's Court in An Giang province placed Venerable Tim Sakhorn on a trial without a legal representation. Venerable Tim Sakhorn was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. However, Venerable Tim Sakhorn forced to admit to his crime, hence he would be imprisoned for only 1 year." Venerable Tim Sakhorn is currently a resident of Sweden, who has also lived to re-tell his painful experiences under the brutal methods of torture committed by the Vietnamese interrogators and the Vietnamese authorities. Venerable Tim Sakhorn described the same harsh conditions and brutal treatments during his incarceration in Vietnam as the above cases of Venerable Danh Tol and Kim Moeun, in order to make fabricate a forced confession on his case. The Vietnamese even forced him to work as spy and was many times given the chemical injections to immobilize his mind due to his refusals to cooperate with their demands on forced confessions.