

Fourth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals: “Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger”
United Nations Headquarter, New York

May 16 – 27, 2005

Item 4a: Human Rights
Date: May 23rd, 2005
Speaker: Laura Lo Xiong

Madam Chair:



Thank you for this great opportunity to participate in the Fourth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. We would like to make a joint statement on behalf of the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation representing indigenous Khmer-Krom Peoples living in Vietnam and Hmong International Human Rights Watch representing Hmong people living in Vietnam and Laos.

We would like the Forum to acknowledge the Khmer-Krom and Hmong peoples’ identities. There are over 50 ethnics living in Vietnam and Laos, but only two ethnics having this opportunity to voice our sufferings.

We would like the Forum to acknowledge the following problems:

1. Religious persecution continues to suffer and freedom of practice is limited. Religious teaching no longer teaches the true and original belief practices, instead only as propaganda.
2. Lands and homes confiscation by force are promoted among Vietnamese and Lao government authorities leaving tens and thousands of our people homeless and some are forced to live in the environment isolated from economic growth.
3. Freedom of movement and assembly is prohibited among our people. They are forced to live in small groups far away from healthcare facilities, schools, and economic development.
4. Advance education is denied and lack of schools to help foster young Hmong and Khmer-Krom children. Example, only 6 out of estimated 8 million Khmer-Krom received a master degree level and none for PhDs studies. We have estimated that approximately over 95% of the Khmer-Krom people have not passed 6 grades.
5. Our people continue to suffer from involuntarily arrests and wrongly accused of political involvements. Many are detained, beaten and tortured, and some have been made to “disappeared”.

6. Governments continue to deploy military troops to threaten, intimidate and abuse indigenous women and children.
7. Currently, there is no legal system to protect us from inhumane crimes committed both by the Vietnamese and Lao citizen and governments authorities. Wrongly accused victims are imprisoned without trials.
8. Freedom of information does not exist. We are being blackmail and prohibit to reporting any violations with outside organizations.

The governments denied all allegations and refuses to investigate the murder cases or take responsibility for the crime. Instead, over the years, they dismiss all cases as unfounded and continue to violate the basic rights of minorities such as the Hmongs and Kmer-Krom Peoples and denied the existence of indigenous people.

We strongly believe that these violations are unnoticed by the United Nations and international communities due to lack of the recognition of our existence. And to note the Forum that Vietnam has ratified ICCPR, ICESCR, CERD, CEDAW and CRC.

Madam Chair, we would like to make the following recommendation to the Forum and Special Rapporteur as the first step toward the efforts of helping our indigenous Peoples:

1. Investigate the alleged human rights violations- by placing a team, under the auspices of the Forum in Vietnam and Laos to verify and report on the plight of the Khmer-Krom and Hmong peoples, if possible includes all other ethnics.
2. Document case by case- by preparing a document that candidly defines the Human Rights violations focus on the Khmer-Krom and Hmong peoples.
3. Disseminate - by publishing the report, allowing the Khmer-Krom and Hmong peoples to be recognized and enlist the aid of supports.
4. Monitor – by placing a team to monitor the current violations and any progresses by the government.

Thank you.

Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation
Hmong International Human Rights Watch