

Human Rights in Viet Nam: Indigenous Khmer Krom in Geneva to Call Upon the International Community for Action

*The Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) in partnership with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) will hold a **two day demonstration on May 7 and May 8** to draw attention to human rights abuses taking place in Vietnam. The demonstrations are timed to coincide with the very first time that Vietnam will undergo their Universal Periodic Review at the U.N Human Rights Council.*

On 08 May 2009, as the United Nations Human Rights Council convenes to examine Viet Nam's human rights record for the very first time, 400 indigenous Khmer Krom people will assemble in front of the Palais des Nations in Geneva to denounce the distressing situation of ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

In a country where a great number of the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are only an abstract concept, ethnic minorities find themselves in a particularly difficult situation. Sharing the Vietnamese population's harsh fate, they must also carry the full burden of their differences. The 8 million indigenous Khmer Krom find themselves in this situation. An indigenous people having lived in the Mekong delta (in southern Viet Nam) for over 3000 years, they have since the country's independence been the target of organised discriminations and expropriations. These state policies have led to the marginalisation of this population.

In a country where religious practices are subject to severe restrictions, their special bond to therevada Buddhism (a minority branch of Buddhism in Viet Nam) catalysed tensions with the regime. The instauration of Vietnamese as the country's sole language combined with the restrictions imposed on Khmer Krom temples, the last remaining institutions passing on the Khmer culture and language, have contributed to exacerbate tensions between indigenous Khmer Krom people and the regime. The legacy of the Cambodia -Viet Nam war and the current rivalry between these two countries also weigh heavily on the Khmer Krom. As Khmers (the majority ethnic group in Cambodia), they are still often perceived by a fair share of the Vietnamese as "enemies from the inside" and the authorities see any affirmation of their identity as a threat to national integrity. Victims of colonialism and of the partition of territories in the former French Indochina, the Khmer Krom have been engaged in a non-violent struggle to assert their rights and protect their culture for sixty years now.

Gathering grassroots organisations as well as Khmer Krom in diaspora, secular and religious people, personalities of various political affiliations, the Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) works to give the Khmer Krom a voice on the national and international levels. On 08 May 2009, as the United Nations Human Rights Council convenes to examine for the first time Viet Nam's whole human rights record, 400 indigenous Khmer Krom will be present in Geneva, both inside and outside the UN buildings, to remind the international community of the situation faced by ethnic minorities in Viet Nam.

07 May 2009

16h00 – 18h00: Interview opportunities
18h00 – 20h30: Parc de l'Ariana, Mohandas K. Gandhi statue, Candlelit Vigil and Moment of Silence in memory of the victims of the Vietnamese regime.

08 May 2009

08:00 AM - 01:00 PM: Place des Nations (facing the Palais des Nations). Demonstration for the rights of the Khmer Krom in Viet Nam.
10h00: Buddhist Rite, Visak Bochea, followed by traditionnal giving of alms to monks.
11h30 – 12h00: Solemn call to Viet Nam and the international community.
12:00 – 13h00: Reading of the history of Visak Bochea.
13h00 - 16h00: Interview opportunities at the United Nations

Press Contact

M. Vien Thach, KKF, **Tel:** +33 6 2561 1961, **Email:** vf2k@free.fr. **Langue :** Français et Anglais.
Maggie Murphy (UNPO) **Tel :** +31 649 864 340 **Email:** mmurphy@unpo.org **Langue,** Français, Anglais
M. Sinh Tra **Tel:** +41(76)592 7306 **Email :** sinh.tra@gmail.com. **Langue :** Suisse- Allemand