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Vietnamese Authority Confiscated Khmer-Krom's Farmlands

Pennsauken, NJ, 8 May 2020 -- The Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) condemns the inhumane acts of the Vietnamese authority of Kien Giang province for deploying their armed forces to brutally beat and arrest the Khmer Krom farmers who just demanded to return their confiscated farmlands on May 5, 2020.

The Vietnamese authority of Tra Phot commune, Phu My village, Giang Thanh district, Kien Giang province (Ấp Trà Phốt, Xã Phú Mỹ, Huyện Giang Thành, Tỉnh Kiên Giang) has illegally confiscated thousands of hectare of farmlands of 145 Khmer-Krom families. When the Khmer-Krom farmers who are the legal owners of those farmlands filed complaints, the Vietnamese authority has kept neglecting to resolve the issues for decades.

Traditionally, the indigenous Khmer-Krom farmers have been economically dependent solely upon farming for thousands of years on their ancestral lands to survive. Their lands are their only lives. Without these farmlands, there will be no lives for these poor people. By facing with the enormous poverty due to this continuous land grabbing policy, coupled with the long-standing oppression on their human rights and especially their present survival hardship condition during the pandemic of the COVID-19, these peasants have no other choices, but to farm on these confiscated lands again.

On May 5, 2020, the Vietnamese authority cracked down the farming activities by the Khmer-Kroms instead of resolving the issues peacefully. The Vietnamese authority sent hundreds of their police forces, armed with guns, electric batons, and tear gas, to brutally beat 46 Khmer-Krom farmers (36 women and ten men) while they were defending their rights to farm on their farmlands. One Khmer-Krom woman (71 years old) was severely beaten, injured, and hand-cuffed.

The Khmer-Krom farmers are the poorest people in the Mekong Delta. During this pandemic, the Vietnamese government has not provided any financial support to the Khmer-Krom. Instead of helping them, the Communist authority of Kien Giang province even used violence to force the Khmer-Krom out of their own farmlands.

In this regard, the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation urgently calls on the international community to urge Vietnam to return the confiscated farmlands to the Khmer-Krom farmers. Vietnam must respect the indigenous Khmer-Krom's rights to live on their ancestral land as enshrined in Article 26.1 (*Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired*) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that Vietnam signed to adopt on September 13, 2007.

