



# សហព័ន្ធខ្មែរកម្ពុជា-ក្រោម

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## **Khmer-Krom Facing Misery for Survival due to the Surge of COVID-19 in the Mekong Delta**

**Pennsauken, NJ, 30 July 2021** -- The Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) condemns the unethical actions of Vietnamese authority handling the recent surge of the COVID-19, causing the Khmer-Krom to face misery and threatening their safety and survival.

As the indigenous peoples of the Mekong Delta, most of the Khmer-Krom are farmers. Facing inequality, discrimination, and losing the farmlands, thousands of the Khmer-Krom, especially the youths, left their beloved villages in the Mekong Delta to look for works in the big cities, such as Sai Gon, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, etc. Working far away from home, most of the Khmer-Krom workers have to rent rooms near factories.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has surged lately in Vietnam and Sai Gon is currently Vietnam's epicenter, the Khmer-Krom workers have been facing lockdown, and their lives are facing miserable. Most of the Khmer-Krom workers have to stay home without pay. Their lives base on the monthly salary. Without work, they don't have money to pay for food and rent. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese authorities have not provided any financial support.

The Vietnamese authorities continue to extend the lockdown. In some cases, the authorities allow the Khmer-Krom workers to go back to their villages. But when they arrive at their villages, they have to face quarantine. Ironically, instead of helping the workers with financial assistance, the authorities require the workers to pay for quarantine fees which cause a deepened burden on the workers who have had no jobs since the recent lockdown.

The Khmer-Krom shared on social media about the unethical actions of the Vietnamese authorities by taking advantage of implementing the quarantine to pocketing money from the fees charging against the people who are being suspected as having been exposed to the COVID-19. One video shows some Khmer-Krom have been brought into the quarantine place in a school housing hundreds of people without following the social distancing and living in a terrible condition that is worse than quarantine at home and also facing the charges to pay for the quarantine fees.

Vietnam used to be proud as the champion of handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The recent surge of the COVID-19 shows that the Vietnamese authorities have not seriously prepared to protect the ordinary people in Vietnam and not be able to control the corruption at the local level. When the surge of COVID-19 has been an outbreak, the authorities start implementing the lockdown without providing financial assistance or food for the poor people, especially the



religious leaders, like the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks. As the Buddhist followers practicing Theravada Buddhism, the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks have to go for alms to ask for food daily to eat for their lunch before noon. Since facing lockdown, many Khmer-Krom temples have been facing food shortage issues.

In this regard, the Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation (KKF) urgently calls on the international community to:

- Urge Vietnam to stop charging the quarantine fees against the Khmer-Krom, who are already facing financial difficulty due to the lockdown.
- Urge Vietnam to stop taking the Khmer-Krom who are just being suspected as exposed to COVID-19 to be quarantined at home instead of taken to quarantine at the crowded quarantine place without proper following the social distancing and having quality medical treatments.
- Urge Vietnam to provide financial assistance to help the Khmer-Krom, especially the Khmer-Krom workers facing financial issues to pay for rents and food.
- Urge WHO to monitor the vaccines given to Vietnam to ensure that those vaccines are equally distributed to the Khmer-Krom, not just the leaders of the Vietnamese authorities.

