

H.E. Mr. Hong Lam Le  
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concerns about the state of the freedom of religion and belief in Vietnam, particularly for the Khmer Krom people and other ethnic groups.

On December 2, Vietnamese authorities ordered the destruction of a religious hall in Tong Hung Hamlet belonging to the Khmer Krom people. The hall is intended to facilitate practice of Theravada Buddhism and teaching of the Khmer language to children.

The incident appears to be part of a tendency to control indigenous religious communities to the extent that it infringes on their fundamental religious freedom. For instance, all teaching materials are controlled by the government, and religious books in the Khmer language are restricted. Authorities require information about the ordination of religious clergy, annual overviews of planned activities, and permits to gather in large groups. Religious communities that speak a native language are consistently restricted and targeted by the authorities, seemingly with the intent to control and oversee the content of their teachings. Unfortunately, the order to destroy the religious hall exemplifies how these measures are being used to restrict and control faith communities.

In 2019, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed their concern for religious freedom in Vietnam by virtue of the many administrative measures faced by religious communities. In accordance with international human rights instruments that Vietnam have ratified and article 24 of the Vietnamese Constitution which requires the State to respect and protect freedom of belief and religion, I humbly ask for your intervention in ensuring that:

- The Khmer Krom community in Tong Hung Hamlet is allowed to construct and use their religious hall without government interference.
- Authorities cease targeting and controlling indigenous peoples' religious affairs, allowing them to teach and practice their religion in their native language.
- Vietnam continues working towards actualizing religious freedom for all in accordance with their constitution and international human rights conventions.

Sincerely,