



MONTAGNARD FOUNDATION, INC.

Dedicated to the preservation of the indigenous people of entral Vietnam

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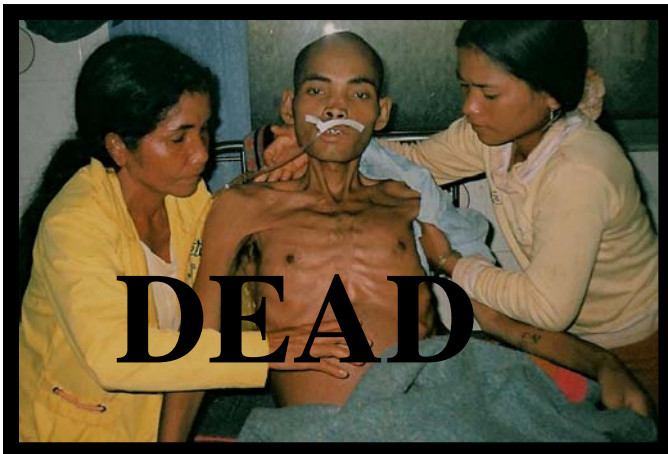
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VIETNAM'S BLUEPRINT FOR ETHNIC CLEANSING

Report on the Persecution of the Indigenous Degar Montagnards

May 2008



VIETNAM'S BLUEPRINT FOR ETHNIC CLEANSING: PERSECUTION OF THE INDIGENOUS DEGAR MONTAGNARDS

This report documents the case of ethnic cleansing directed against the indigenous Degar Montagnards (“Degar people”) of Vietnam’s central highlands. Over the preceding decades since 1975 the Vietnamese government has implemented various strategies resulting in the political, ethnic and religious repression against the Degar people. Examining the evidence collectively, a blueprint of ethnic cleansing emerges as these human rights violations, including official and spontaneous transmigration policies, large scale deforestation, abuse of family planning methods, religious persecution, land confiscation, torture and extrajudicial killing, have been directed against a specific race of indigenous peoples. Since the year 2000 thousands of Degar people have been arrested in a policy of “arrest, torture and release” while hundreds of Degars in 2008 remain in prison. The latest torture killings of Degar Christians includes the April 2008 murder of two Degar children and the torture killing of a Degar man who had a rope placed around his neck by security police and was dragged by a vehicle until he died (details on page 4 -5).

While this report was being prepared in April 2008 the central highlands erupted in peaceful protests involving thousands of Degars calling for an end to persecution. See: <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/8028/236/>. The Vietnamese authorities reacted with violence attacking the peaceful protesters wounding many, see: MFI <http://specialreport.degar.org/08/>. In the following report a brief background of the Degar people is presented followed by the categories of human rights violations and crimes against humanity which paint a grim picture of how Vietnam over the decades has implemented its version of ethnic cleansing towards an indigenous people. The evidence of this persecution comes from various authorities namely the US State Department, the United Nations, US International Commission of Religious Freedom and internationally recognized NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

BACKGROUND

The Degar peoples, also referred to under the French Colonial term “Montagnard” are the indigenous peoples of South-East Asia who for over 2,000 years inhabited the “Central Highlands” a region geographically located in the western mountains of the communist government of Vietnam (“Vietnam”). These proud peoples of over 30 tribal groups are however, recognized as indigenous peoples by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations of which the Montagnard Foundation, Inc (“MFI”) has represented them. Historically the Degar world revolved around tribal village communities where they practiced traditional agriculture, hunting and gathering. During the Indo-China wars involving France and the United States, the ancestral lands of the Degar people would be ceded to Vietnamese government control and the Degar population decimated. The Vietnam War foresaw one quarter of the Degar population being killed - an estimated 200,000 people and most of their village societies destroyed. One half of the male Degar population died fighting alongside US soldiers, as the Degar Montagnards were allied with the United States during the Vietnam War.¹

¹ Hickey, Gerald, *Shattered World: Adaptation and Survival among Vietnam’s Highland Peoples During the Vietnam War*, (1993) University of Pennsylvania Press at 261.

KILLINGS, IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE

- The US State Department described the 30 July 2007 death in police custody of Degar Christian **Y-Ngo Adrong** as “*a credible report of an extrajudicial killing by security forces*”. See, Vietnam Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006 released March, 6, 2007: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78796.htm>.
- The US State Department reported on the Easter 2004 killings in the Central Highlands, stating “*Credible estimates put the number of protestors killed by police at least in double digits; some international organizations report that the figures may be much higher.*” See, Vietnam Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005 released March 8, 2005: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61632.htm>
- “Degar Montagnard Torture Victims Speak Out” see Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOSKDjYPyXU>

Since the year 2000, thousands of Degar Montagnards have been arrested, in what can be described as a policy of “arrest, torture, threaten and release” by Vietnamese security forces of whose intent is to *repress the Degar population*. Many Degars however are not released, being sentenced to prison terms and others die from torture and abuse for non violent peaceful activities. In recent years the Vietnamese government has intensified surveillance and paramilitary operations in the Central Highlands with the intent to crush both the spread of house Church Christianity and the Degar population from seeking legitimate redress for human rights abuses. Such arrests involved threats and torture, including beatings designed to deliberately cause death from internal injuries, electric shock torture and outright killings of indigenous Degar people for religious and non-violent political human rights activities.

On 27 April 2001 the AFP reported that a total of 13 regiments and 20,000 households were occupied by security forces in the Central Highlands² In 2008 Degar villagers continually contact their relatives in the United States, describing arrests, torture and killings of their people. The true number of these victims and the true number of those killed remains unknown as the Central Highland region remains largely cordoned off from independent monitors and official restrictions are placed upon the press and foreign delegations.

Human Rights Watch has documented over 350 Degar prisoners who remain in Vietnamese prisons, many convicted in secret one-day trials on trumped-up charges relating to peaceful protests for human rights, for spreading Christianity or for attempting to flee to Cambodia. See: <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2006/06/14/vietna13542.htm>

The horrors inside the prisons are appalling and to date MFI has documented specific details of over 47 Degars killed by Vietnamese security forces many after enduring torture and abuse. One

² AFP, *Vietnam Settling Soldiers, Militiamen in Restive Central Highlands*, 27 April 2001

of the victims was named Rahlan Hen who died from torture on 17 March 2008. Details of his death are located on MFI's website: see <http://montagnard-foundation.org/Press/?p=62>.

Details of other murders are described below:

On 28 April 2008 Vietnamese security police murdered a Degar Christian named Y Ben Hdok by torture and with a rope around his neck dragging him with their jeep until he died.

On April 28, 2008 the Vietnamese security police used a Degar policeman, Y-Blen Nie, to entrap another Degar in order to arrest and kill him. The police asked Y-Blen Nie to invite his friend, Y-Ben Hdok, to drink coffee at a restaurant near the police station. When our Christian brother, Y-Ben Hdok, arrived at a restaurant, eight Vietnamese security police including Y-Blen Nie attacked him, handcuffed him and took him to a secluded place where they beat him. They struck him repeatedly with batons, kicked, punched, and stomped on him until he fell unconscious. They broke the bones in both his upper and lower legs and also his upper and lower arms. Then they placed a rope around his neck, tied it to their jeep and dragged him around until he died. After that, they took his corpse to the hospital and called his family, claiming that Y-Ben Hdok had killed himself. His parents and his wife asked the chief police from Daklak province *“how could a person break all the bones in his own legs, arms, ribs and then break out all of his own teeth, and crack his skull on both the front and back sides, and then scratch and burn his skin and tear up his own clothes like he had been dragged through the ground in addition to the rope burns around his neck? How can a man kill himself in this way?”* The face of the Vietnamese police chief became red and he was furious because he had no answer. The marks on his body were clearly visible to his wife and parents when they cleaned his body before the burial. The family also asked the Degar police who was involved in the killing and they were told that the Vietnamese police had put a rope around Y-Ben Hdok's neck and tied it to their jeep while he was still alive and dragged him around until he died. The brutality and hatred of the Vietnamese government is beyond measure. When his corpse was brought home, the security police arrived to stop the family from taking pictures or producing any evidence. They also prevented relatives and friends from viewing the body. Even worse, they tried to stop the family and relatives from crying and mourning and they threatened the family, ordering them not to tell anyone, not even relatives in the US about Y-Ben Hdok's death. On the day of the burial, on May 4, 2008, around 200 security police escorted the family to the burial grounds where other security police were also stationed to prevent foreigners from interviewing the family and to prevent villagers from conducting peaceful demonstrations. Y-Ben Hdok was born in 1979 in the village of Buon Dung, commune of Cu Ebur, Buonmethuot city in Daklak province.

The Vietnamese security police who were involved in his murder were:

1. Doan Van Tri, Vietnamese
2. Pham Duc Can, Vietnamese
3. Y-Rina Mlo, Degar
4. Y-Blenh Nie, Degar
5. Bui Quang Thuan, Vietnamese
6. Pham Thi Ky, Vietnamese
7. Y-To Nie, Degar
8. Y-Lil, Degar

Two Degar children were murdered by 4 Vietnamese security police and 4 Vietnamese villagers from the village of Thon Hai Hung.

On April 15, 2008, while their parents were working on their farm, **Y-Thiep Mlo** (9 years old) and **Y-Bui Nie** (8 years old) went fishing on the bank of the Kdrol River which is beside their farm. 4 Vietnamese civilians and 4 Vietnamese security police from the Vietnamese village of Thon Hai Hung were walking along the bank of Kdrol River at this time and saw that the two Degar Children fishing along the river bank alone. Without any reason other than sheer racism, these grown men attacked the Degar children, beat them up, drowned them and then placed large rocks on their chest to keep their corpses submerged. In the evening, when the parents of both children could not find them, they went to the nearby Vietnamese village of Thon Hai Hung and asked the Vietnamese villagers if they had seen their children. One of the Vietnamese villagers told them that *“your children are dead, come with me and I will show you where they died.”* The Vietnamese villager led them to the river bank. The fathers jumped into the water and found their children on the bottom of the river with large rocks placed upon their chest. The parents remembered that the 4 Vietnamese civilians and 4 Vietnamese security police had passed by their farm earlier but did not think that these people would actually murder their children. The parents took their children’s corpses back to their village and buried them on April 18, 2008. The parents did not report the murder to the police because the Vietnamese government has a history of accusing any Degar who comes to them for help of being separatists and wanting to overthrow the Vietnamese government. Degar victims are commonly sent to prison, tortured and killed whenever they dare to report a crime committed by a Vietnamese person.

The immediate photographs below were smuggled out of Vietnam and show the before and after photographs of another Degar man named Dieu Suoi who died from torture by Vietnamese authorities on 29 May 2007.

Below: Dieu Suoi just before his death in May 2007.



Above: Dieu Suoi before his arrest.



Died in Prison: The photograph below was smuggled out of prison and shows the burial of a Degar prisoner who died from abuse on **August 30, 2006**. This Christian Degar was named **Ksor Thup** and he died in Trai Ba Sao prison in Ha Nam from abuse and torture. He was born in 1952, from Plei Dop village, Kon Gang commune, Dak Doa district, GiaLai province. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on February 24, 2005 for what Vietnam calls “public order offences”. Unnamed Vietnamese officials from Kon Gang Commune informed his family he died from abuse on August 30, 2006 and it was well known he was severely tortured in prison. His relatives asked officials if they could collect his body for burial but were refused and it is believed such was done because officials did not want his family to see the condition of his body.



(Left) Prison burial photo of Ksor Thup.

(Right) family photo of Ksor Thup.



(Left - Prison Photo) A Degar named **Y Mpi** died on **October 5, 2007** having never recovered from torture he received in prison. Born in 1958 he is from Sarpa village, Thuan An commune, Dakmil district, Dak Lak province and was released from Ha Nam prison on 28 May 2006. In custody he had been severely tortured and fearing he would die in custody he was released. He spent his remaining days near at Kien Giang Hospital.

(Right) Degar House Church Christian Preacher man named Siu Blok died from abuse and torture by Vietnamese authorities. He was imprisoned for illegal church activities after being videotaped giving an illegal prayer blessing in 2006. He was severely tortured and eventually doctors stated they could not treat him anymore as he was dieing and the security police issued him release papers. The paper stated if he recovers after 9 months he will be re-arrested and send back to finish his prison term. On 2 September 2007 Siu Blok was released to his village but placed under house arrest. **October 1, 2007** at approximately 11 am the Christian Preacher Siu Blok died. His wife and close relatives wanted to take his picture but security police threatened them and prevented his battered body from being photographed.



TRANSMIGRATION, FORCED RELOCATIONS & CONFISCATION OF ANCESTRAL LAND

- The US State Department in its Vietnam Country Report on Human Rights Practices of 2006 (released March 6, 2007) reported that, *“The government resettled some ethnic minorities from inaccessible areas to locations where basic services were easier to provide; however, the resettlement sometimes diluted the political and social solidarity of these groups. The government acknowledged that one of the goals of resettlement was to persuade the minorities to change from traditional slash and burn agricultural methods to sedentary agriculture. This resettlement program also had the effect of making more land available to ethnic Vietnamese migrants and state owned plantations.* <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78796.htm>
- The US State Department in its Vietnam Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2001 released March 4, 2002 stated, *“Large-scale, government-encouraged as well as spontaneous migration of ethnic Kinh to the Central Highlands has diluted the indigenous culture there.”* <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eap/8384.htm>
- In 1997 the United Nations Development Program UNDP reported on the forced relocations of Degar people stating such relocations have, *“not always been favorable for the ethnic people mainly because of the limits on land allocations and land use”* and *“The resettlement of ethnic people often disrupted their social organization and their traditional farming systems.”* See: HPP - Highlands Peoples Program Management Team Report, March (1997) Country Comparisons On Highland Peoples Development Issues – Viet nam, A Background Document – Inter-Ministerial Committee for Highlands peoples Development in the North-east of Cambodia. (UNDP) United Nations Developmental Program at section titles, Ethnic Minority Situation.

The Hanoi government had long ago commenced the forced confiscation of Degar ancestral land - the lifeblood of its indigenous peoples and over the preceding decades, forcibly relocated Degar villages to areas of poor farmland and limited health services. Reminiscent of Stalin's purges, these began as 5-year plans (large-scale internal migration policies) which brought thousands of ethnic Vietnamese from the coast and North Vietnam onto traditional Degar lands. This occurred throughout the 80s and 90s and while no longer called 5-year plans, this spontaneous and government sponsored internal migration continues today in 2008 throughout the Central Highlands. Various authorities including the US State Department acknowledged such (see above). This displacement program is sometimes called “Fixed Field, Fixed Residence” (which also makes the Degar Montagnard's traditional agricultural practices illegal) has effectively condemned the Degar people to a life of poverty. Vietnam through discrimination and corruption has also been unable to provide any reasonable alternatives to its' indigenous minorities. The US State Department has also reported that, *“longstanding societal discrimination against ethnic minorities remained a problem”* while UNICEF had reported that ethnic minority children in Vietnam suffer the worst rates of malnutrition and poverty.

Some examples of forced relocations and land confiscation are:

Village burned and inhabitants Forcibly Relocated

On July 25, 2007 the Vietnamese soldiers and security forces, using threats and physical violence forcibly removed hundreds of Degar families from Ha Mong Commune (four villages in total: Ploi Tol, Ploi Dak Yo, Ploi Dak Wok and Ploi Ha Mong Ktu village) in Dak Ha district in Kontum province. The soldiers burned all of their homes, huts, personal belongings and food stocks of wild potatoes and roots. The government was building a dam for a power plant in the area and forcibly relocated these four villages to Cu Krenng commune, more than 10 km away from their villages where the lands were of poor farmland. The villages had protested against this forced relocation as they wanted to stay on their ancestral lands where they had lived for generations.

Officials Attack Degar Farmers

On May 1, 2006 a Degar Montagnard named Kpa Ju and his wife were attacked by five Vietnamese Forest Ministry officials named Trung, Chinh, Quyen, Nam and fifth official's name was unknown. The officials beat and kicked Kpa Ju until he fell down and sprayed him with chemical repellent. Kpa Ju was 48 years of age and he is from Ploi Poi "B" village, Ia Ale commune, Cu Se District, Gialai Province and had been farming on his ancestral lands.

Officials Attack Degar Farmers beaten and sprayed with chemicals

On April 18, 2006, Rmah Suan age 28, from the village of Ploi Poi "B", Ia Ale commune, Cu Se District, Gialai Province, was farming with his wife Siu H'Blaih and their three children Siu Anuan (age 5), Siu H'Biap (age 3) and Siu H'Gai who is only a few months old at their rice fields. In the morning Rmah Suan was planting rice while his wife and children were cooking at their nearby farm hut. Five Vietnamese Forest Ministry officials named Trung, Chinh, Quyen, Nam and fifth official's name was unknown, arrived and told him to leave as the land belongs to the government. Rmah Suan responded that, this land belonged to his great-great grand parents and his family has lived on this farmland for generations. The officials threw his basket of rice seeds on the ground and punched and kicked Rmah Suan until he was unconscious. The officials beat his wife also and sprayed them all including the children and baby who is only a few months old with chemical repellent. They threatened them to get off these lands and left them there with the children screaming and crying from being sprayed with the chemical.

The preceding decades of land and environmental exploitation has resulted in the Degar population being marginalized and forced into a cycle of poverty and malnutrition. The Degar culture has been repressed and Vietnam's policy towards these indigenous peoples has been nothing less than blatant repression and benign neglect.

DEFORESTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION OF ANCESTRAL LAND

- *“Vietnam is operating as a centre for processing huge quantities of unlawfully-logged timber from across Indochina, threatening some of the last intact forests in the region”*
See: Report, Environmental Investigations Agency *“Borderlines: Vietnam’s Booming Furniture Industry and Timber Smuggling in the Mekong Region”* 19 March 2008.
<http://www.eia-international.org/cgi/news/news.cgi?t=template&a=447&source=>
- January 2001 the former director of Vietnam’s Department of Forestry Development, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Lung stated, *“Due to unchecked timber exploitation, most of our forests have been depleted, with depletion rates reaching well over 60 percent.”* See: South China Morning Post, *Race to Shield Dwindling Forests From Loggers*, 2 January 2001.

The Vietnamese government has long confiscated lands throughout the Central Highlands and developed the region for private and state run coffee plantations, mining and extensive logging operations. Large scale logging operations owned by the military have illegally cut thousands of cubic meters from forest reserves and today in 2008 Vietnam has stretched these activities to neighboring Laos and Cambodia, where in co-operation with these governments (and military) the region has now become a hub of illegal clear fell logging. Indigenous villages throughout the region have for many years been subject to forced relocations to provide access to such logging companies and government run coffee and rubber plantations. The logging operations inside Vietnam resulted in extensive clear fell deforestation that has destroyed the once great forests of the Central Highlands. In 2001 the former director of Vietnam’s Department of Forestry Development, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Lung, stated, *“Due to unchecked timber exploitation, most of our forests have been depleted, with depletion rates reaching well over 60 percent.”* Vietnam’s Ministry of Labor also reported that between 1975 and 1985 that one-fourth of all the forests in the Central Highlands has been destroyed.

The latest news concerning such environmental exploitation is reported by the NGO Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Telapak-Indonesia in their report of 19 March 2008. Titled *“Borderlines: Vietnam’s Booming Furniture Industry and Timber Smuggling in the Mekong Region”* the opening press release states *“Vietnam: How the Country has become a hub for the regions illegal timber trade.*

The governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have also jointly embarked on a massive economic development project in the vast region (triangle area) of their countries and have been reportedly called the *“Triangle Project”*. The plan was officially adopted in agreements reached between the Prime Ministers of Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia at their 3rd summit in 2004 and ratified by the three countries on 28 November 2004. The triangle area encompasses over a hundred thousand square miles in the region bordering these three countries and has already resulted in deforestation and the forced removal of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands. Reports of land confiscations in Vietnam and Cambodia are common. Endemic levels of corruption exist at every level of government in these three countries and environmental

exploitation has negatively affected the indigenous peoples throughout the region. Deforestation is continuing at unprecedented levels in Cambodia and Laos as these countries engage in illegal logging, permitting officials at the highest levels of government to reap massive profits from deforestation. It is reported that the governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia all co-operate at various levels in these activities and the NGO *Global Witness* has directly implicated the Cambodian government in these abuses in a detailed 95 page report titled “*Cambodia’s Family Trees*”. http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/546/en/cambodias_family_trees.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

- *In view of the overall deterioration of human rights conditions in Vietnam, which includes continued abuses of religious freedom and related human rights, the Commission continues to find that lifting the CPC designation for Vietnam was premature. We recommend that Vietnam be re-designated as a CPC in 2008.* US International Commission of Religious Freedom, May 2, 2008 http://www.uscirf.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2191&Itemid=1
- *“There also were numerous reports of local authorities attempting to force ethnic minority Protestants to renounce their faith. In the villages of Druh, B’Le, B’Gha, V’Sek, Koyua, Tung Thang, Tung Kinh, and Dung in Ea H’Leo district of Dak Lak Province, ethnic minority commune and district officials, some of whom are ethnic minorities themselves, were assigned to coerce Protestant followers symbolically to abandon Protestantism by drinking alcohol mixed with animal blood in a ritual called “the ceremony of repentance.”* US State Department 2004 International Religious Freedom Report: Vietnam <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35433.htm>
- *“Those who are hostile and extremely resistant treat them severely and publicly denounce them to the citizens explaining their activities of destroying the country, dividing the ethnic groups, and their other illegal actions.”* Official Vietnamese Government Documents, Central Bureau of Religious Affairs, Hanoi 2006.

Religious repression of Christianity, particular repression against independent house church Protestantism practiced by many Degar people has long been part of Vietnamese government policy. Officially the policy is called “Plan 184” and was initially exposed by Freedom House in the late 1990s. This policy included repressing Christianity including forcing Degar people to renounce their Christian faith in official ceremonies, under threat of imprisonment and torture and included actual renunciation ceremonies conducted by authorities who using threats of torture and arrest would force Degar Christians to drink rice wine mixed with animal blood. These barbaric procedures were actually documented by the US State Department and the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. Human Rights Watch also confirmed such, reporting that, “*Beginning in June [2001], provincial authorities conducted dozens of ceremonies in the Central Highlands in which Montagnards who had participated in the February demonstrations were*

forced to read confessions about their alleged wrongdoings and renounce Christianity in front of entire villages, sealing their pledges by mandatory drinking of rice wine mixed with goat's blood." Human Rights Watch also confirmed that such religious persecution stems from official Communist Party directives and stated, " Confidential government directives issued between 1999 and 2001 show a centrally directed national campaign and special bureaucratic infrastructure to target and suppress Christians in ethnic minority areas in the northern and western highlands."

While the US State Department withdrew the "Countries of Particular Concern" designation ("CPC") on Vietnam in 2006, good faith on Vietnam's part was short lived. (CPC designation is an official category reserved for the worst violators of religious freedom). Upon gaining accession to the WTO and winning Permanent Normal Trade Relations with the US, Vietnam however, re-commenced its repressive ways. The resulting crackdown on house church Christians, dissidents and democracy advocates was described as the worst crackdown in decades by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Subsequently the decision to remove Vietnam from the CPC designation has been seen as premature by the US International Commission of Religious Freedom and Human Rights Watch. Religious persecution continues throughout the Central Highlands of Vietnam today and the Vietnamese authorities are using the pretext of justifying such repression by claiming they are only responding to political or terrorist activities. In reality the Vietnamese authorities are seeking to control religion and very much opposed to independent house churches or any notion of independent religious denominations. Protestantism however, is not alone in facing repression as such persecution is also perpetrated against ethnic Vietnamese Buddhists and Degar Catholics in Vietnam. This ongoing religious persecution forms one of the major grievances the Degar Montagnards have against the communist government. Detailed below are some examples of religious persecution against Christian Degars.

Christian Religious Persecution:

The photograph (right) was smuggled out of Vietnam by refugees and shows Vietnamese security forces arresting Degar Montagnard House Church Christians. The US State Department reported one man named *R'mah Blim* being shot and killed and others wounded. The police burned the Church to the ground. The BBC ran a story on this incident titled "*Fury at Vietnam Church Destruction*" on 28 March 2001.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1245956.stm>



On November 3, 2007 Vietnamese security police confiscated 60 cows belonging to nine Christian Degar families in Hamong district of Dak Ha in Kontum province. The Security police

threatened the owners of the cows and stated they can have them back only if they sign an agreement stipulating that that they will never again pray to the Virgin Mary.

On February 28, 2008, Vietnamese security officials, from Kpang district, along with 100 soldiers surrounded a Degar Christian man's family home and farmlands. The security officials demanded the Degar Christian named Dinh Plok and his family sign documents renouncing their Christian faith. Dinh Plok and his family all refused to sign the renouncement papers and the security forces forced the family out of their home at gunpoint to a nearby wooded area. Dinh Plok was told that his farm and house now belonged to the government and that if he or any of his family or relatives stepped foot on those lands again, they would be immediately killed.

STERILIZATIONS, FINES, COERCION & ABUSE OF FAMILY PLANNING

- Vietnamese Minister Tran Thi Trung Chien stated that Vietnam intends to achieve a *“zero growth rate, especially in rural remote areas”*. Asia Pulse, *Vietnam Plans Targets 0% Population Growth in Rural Areas by 2005*, December 27, 2001.
- On 8 August 2001, the Vietnamese Ambassador to the UN, Nguyen Quy Binh testified before the UN Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination. His response to questions of forced and coerced sterilizations was that the Vietnamese government offers *“incentives and fines only”* for sterilizations of Montagnard women and denied sterilizations are *“forced”*.

Abuse of family planning programs in Vietnam have long been reported, however, the extent of the abuse or investigations has not been presented to the public. The Vietnamese government has most certainly embarked on a policy of denial and likely cover up of any such abuses. The endemic corruption in Vietnam however, which permeates throughout the entire Vietnamese government suggests that abuse of family planning, namely coercion, fines, monetary incentives and forcible sterilizations are indeed possible if not likely. It is noted that in 1999 that Vietnam was however, awarded the United Nations Population Award for Family Planning by the UNFPA. The spokesman for the United Nations Population Fund, a Mr. Eric Palstra confirmed in 2001 that the UN and World Bank do indeed fund family planning programs in Vietnam. Mr. Palstra also stated that the financial payments made to those who undergo sterilizations were not incentives but in fact compensation for taking days off work due to the medical procedures. Further Mr. Palstra also stated that correct procedures regarding implementation of family planning did not always trickle down to local authorities.

However, the going allegations and personal testimony of Degar people indicate that such abuse is plausible and several years later in 2001 the Montagnard Foundation documented over 1000 cases of Degar Montagnard women who were surgically sterilized by the Vietnamese authorities through force, coercion, bribery, threats of fines or imprisonment. In fact the names and details were published on the Montagnard Foundation website. The Montagnard Foundation also

reported that over the year 2001 – 2002 the Vietnamese army had assisted medical teams to force entire Montagnard villagers at gunpoint to attend propaganda meetings where they were threatened to get surgically sterilized. Young Degar girls also reported they were forced to receive injections that they were told prevents them from getting pregnant. The Montagnard Foundation even compiled the names of approximately 40 young Montagnard girls from the village of Buan Plek who have been recently detained at various times by medical teams, which had injected them with some “unknown substances”. The medical teams had made statements that these injections prevent pregnancies and it was reported that soldiers intimidated and threatened the girls to undergo these injections.

Some of the typical reports concerning abuse of family planning as reported by Montagnard Foundation members and refugees include the following: *a Degar woman who was sterilized without consent by medical personnel after giving birth. A Montagnard woman named Hngach said that the Vietnamese authorities offered money to Montagnard women to be surgically sterilized in her village during the late 1990s. She also stated that Montagnard women were fined if they did not have this surgery. A Degar man named Mal stated that the Vietnamese Government began promoting sterilizations in the Central Highlands in 1992 and continued doing so until he left Vietnam in 1997. He stated that the Degar women in his village were offered 100,000 dong to be surgically sterilized and if these women did not agree to this operation they were forced to attend “education meetings” until they consented to the operation. In addition, Mal said that women were fined if they were not sterilized. A Degar woman named H’bon stated that her sister died after being sterilized in 1997. She also stated that the Vietnamese government promised her husband a good job with the police as an incentive for her to undergo the operation. After her death the Vietnamese police then fired her husband from the job.*

In the early 1990s the communist authorities conducted sterilizations using an acid chemical “quinicrine,” in pellet form which when inserted into the uterus, the pellet would dissolve and *burns the uterus shut*. The British Medical journal 'Lancet' reported over 31,000 women being sterilized in Vietnam by this method (see: *Lancet*, 1993, 342, 24 July at page 213-217). It is unknown whether Vietnam still uses this “acid” today.

In conclusion the abuse of family planning in Vietnam has been widely reported yet any public record pertaining to the issue and to what extent Vietnam has abused Degar woman’s reproductive rights or whether or not Vietnam violated the UN Genocide Convention is still not clear. What is clear, however, is that there are Degar woman today who report sterilizations and that in 1996 a Degar woman who now resides in the United States was sterilized without her consent and *bears the scar on her stomach to prove it*.

CONCLUSION: ETHNIC CLEANSING

Since 2001 over 1000 Degar refugees have been granted political asylum in the United States having fled across the Cambodian border to UN refugee camps. However, many hundreds of Degars who tried escaping persecution were actually arrested while fleeing across the Cambodian border and sold for cash to Vietnamese authorities. This disgraceful situation carried on for years and in 2003 UN Special Envoy to Cambodia Peter Leuprecht denounced the practice by Cambodian Police of forcibly returning Degars back to Vietnam. In a statement to the Associated Press on 5 December 2003 he stated there were *"reasons to believe that there are people in the highlands on the other side of the border who have a justified fear of persecution by the Vietnamese government."*

In July 2005 approximately 100 Degar refugees were detained and attacked by Cambodian police – some beaten unconscious and dragged on to buses and then deported to Vietnam. This was done under UNHCR supervision and approval. On 21 July 2005 Congressman James Leach of Iowa condemned this act stating in the US Congressional Record,

"From a humanitarian vantage, the repatriation of Montagnard families in these circumstances was unacceptable, and was carried out to the discredit of both Cambodian authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In essence this appalling situation facing the Degar refugees (being hunted down by Cambodian and Vietnamese authorities while being sidelined by the international community) symbolizes the fate of the entire Degar population in Vietnam. The Degar people are trapped in Vietnam and face brutal persecution with little recourse. The future of these indigenous peoples is in doubt as religious persecution and ethnic exploitation continues, in what appears nothing short of a blueprint for ethnic cleansing.

The Hanoi government had long ago confiscated the ancestral lands of the Degar people - the lifeblood of these indigenous peoples and over the subsequent decade relocated Degar villages to areas of poor farmland and limited health services. The once great forests of the Central Highlands have been virtually logged to oblivion by companies controlled by the Vietnamese military. Today Vietnam's logging operations moves cunningly westward, in collusion with Cambodian and Laotian officials as they continue unabated in the illegal destruction of the region's delicate ecosystem. Communist ideology had also presented a further mode of attack on the Degar people as their culture was declared "backward" and Vietnam enacted assimilation policies to eliminate the Degar cultural identity. In the 1990s, Vietnam also increased coercive birth-control programs specifically on the Degar population, using threats, fines and financial incentives to force their woman to get surgically sterilized. Having repressed the Degar way of life, Vietnam simultaneously sought to *eliminate their religion*. The official strategy called "Plan

184” involved repressing Christianity with a vengeance, including forcing Degars to renounce their Christian faith in official ceremonies.

Today an estimated 350 Degar prisoners remain in Vietnamese prisons, many having been convicted in secret one-day trials on trumped-up charges. Vietnam’s war against the independent “House Church” Christians continues unabated while Vietnam makes false promises of reform to the international community. The US State Department reported in March 2007 that Vietnam “*continued to impose extra security measures in the central highlands*”. Unfortunately for the Degar population this simply translates into arrests, torture, harassment and killings.

The Degar people are experiencing persecution today much as the North and South American Indigenous peoples or Australian Aboriginals suffered under European colonialism. Religious persecution, human rights violations and lands rights abuses continue today in the Central Highlands much as they did over the past decades. For the Degar people, they face a troubled future as Vietnam fiercely resists human rights reforms and fights desperately to retain authoritarian control. The international community further appears unable to stem this tide of persecution and seems more interested in economic relations with Vietnam than demanding they undertake human rights reforms. The Degar people are basically being forced to watch their race, their people, their culture and their future being eliminated and the preceding decades of persecution is nothing less than – *ethnic cleansing*.