

VIETNAM'S BLUEPRINT FOR ETHNIC CLEANSING

Persecution Against the Indigenous Degar People (Montagnards)

Report to the European Parliament
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Died from Torture in Prison

Murdered by Security Police



A Montagnard Foundation Inc Report

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The Degar Montagnards are the indigenous peoples of South-East Asia who for over 2,000 years inhabited the “Central Highlands” (highlighted area). This region is geographically located in the western mountains of Vietnam (bordering Cambodia and Laos). The French colonial name “Montagnard” for these various ethnic tribal groups is being replaced by the indigenous term “Degar”. There are over a dozen tribes and sub groups who have (over the preceding decades) formed a collective common identity.

Section 1: About the Montagnard Foundation, Inc

The Montagnard Foundation Inc. (MFI) is a private, non-profit corporation based in South Carolina, USA and operated by indigenous peoples known as the Degar Montagnards. The organization was founded by Degar exiles in 1990 and received its US tax-exempt status in 1992. There is a board of directors composed of ethnic Degars and the organization is based on non violent advocacy and democratic principals. While most of our members are Christian our organization is non denominational and our overall focus is representation for our people inside Vietnam concerning their indigenous rights and basic human rights.

The term “Degar” is our own indigenous term used today in lieu of the older French name “Montagnard” (mountain people) which the colonial French gave to our highland peoples. The name “Degar” is a collective term used to identify our various tribal groups who have developed an ethnic identify much like Native Americans have also been identified as a ‘group’ of peoples. MFI is also a member of the *United Nations Working Group of Indigenous Populations* of which it has participated for many years in numerous United Nations forums.

MFI is an organization that works in consultation with its indigenous population inside Vietnam, who are currently not free to express their rights and freedoms under communist authoritarian rule. The Degar people have also suffered decades of religious and ethnic persecution by the communist government of Vietnam. Since its conception MFI's message has been; *that the Degar Montagnard people deserve to live in peaceful co-existence in a democratic society with the Vietnamese people and all other citizens in Vietnam's Central Highlands*, and this message has been circulated throughout the Central Highlands by MFI's contacts in the region. The Degar population through its people (village chiefs, elders, leaders and common villagers) inside Vietnam are working hand in hand and in regular contact with MFI. MFI has educated

these activists as to the Vietnamese government's international human rights obligations, as a necessary step to obtain democratic reforms for all Vietnam's citizens. The Degar leaders inside Vietnam have contacted MFI to advance their cause at the international level and MFI has encouraged their people to educate the wider Degar population as to what their human rights are and to continue utilizing non-violent strategies in the spirit of democracy and Christian principals. MFI has over a thousand dedicated ethnic Degar supporters who reside in the United States while inside Vietnam MFI has documented through the registration of village chiefs and elders in the Central Highlands over several hundred thousand supporters.

MFI's overriding mission as a liberation movement is to preserve the lives and culture of the indigenous Degar peoples of Vietnam's Central Highlands. The guiding strategy is to monitor, restore and safeguard the innate and inalienable human, civil and political rights of the Degar peoples as described in covenants, declarations and Charters of the United Nations. MFI pledges to accomplish this through peaceful and humanitarian means and all levels of advocacy are pursued with Christian and Ghandian principles of non-violence in the spirit of democracy and international cooperation. The Montagnard Foundation also rejects propaganda by the government of Vietnam that we are separatists and we state clearly our only desire is to advocate and resolve our grievances peacefully and diplomatically.

Our indigenous Degar peoples inside Vietnam are crying out for basic freedoms and MFI believes that it is crucial to the evolving democratic process of Vietnam that international assistance is needed for the Degar people to survive as a race of indigenous peoples. Sincerely and God bless



Section 2: A brief history of the Degar Montagnards

The Degar Montagnards 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 (bordering Cambodia and Laos) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Estimates indicate the Degar Montagnard population is in the vicinity of around 1,000,000 persons (quoting UNDP figures). Often called ‘Hill Tribes’ our proud peoples of over two dozen ethnic groups and sub groups are distinct from the lowland Vietnamese and recognized as indigenous peoples by the *United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations* where MFI has regularly represented their people. Historically the Degar Montagnard world revolved around remote village communities where they practiced traditional agriculture, hunting and fishing.

In 1946 the French colonial government had granted the “Montagnard populations” regional autonomy and the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai (a figurehead under French control) also recognized such autonomy in official decrees in the 1950s. However, during the Indo-China wars involving France, the United States and the communists these ancestral lands would be ceded to Vietnamese government control and the “Montagnard populations” decimated.

During the American Vietnam War an estimated 30 - 40,000 Montagnards served with the US military at any one time and the figure was likely over 100,000 (in total) throughout the decade’s long conflict. Half of the adult male population would die in the war and the renowned anthropologist Dr. Gerald Hickey reported the Vietnam War foresaw the deaths of an estimated 200,000 Degar Montagnards (a quarter of their population) and 85% of their village societies abandoned or destroyed.

In 1975 at the end of the war the communist government, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam gained control of South Vietnam and took revenge against the Degar Montagnards for their

support of America during the war. The communists executed or imprisoned Degar Montagnard leaders in brutal re-education camps. Examples include: Senator Ksor Rot who was publicly executed in 1975 (authorities shot him in the head in the square at Cheo Reo village) and the Minister for Ethnic Minorities, Nay Luett who died under horrific circumstances in 1983 while a prisoner at a labor camp. Summing up the government’s attitude towards ethnic minorities, in 1976 the Vietnamese Vice Minister of Culture stated:

“It is necessary to eradicate all the outmoded customs...while gradually bringing the new culture to each minority...in order to build a new culture with socialist objectives and Vietnamese national characteristics.”

The subsequent decades saw the persecution against the Degar Montagnards involving Christian religious repression, expropriation of ancestral lands, torture, killings, disappearances, coercive sterilization policies, discrimination and violations of internationally accepted human rights practices. While the origins of this persecution stemmed from historical factors namely the alliance many Degar Montagnards had with the US military, discrimination (societal and official) under prior Vietnamese governments also had a detrimental impact on the Degar Montagnard population.

Today in 2008 the communist authoritarian regime perpetuates severe economic exploitation of the Degar Montagnard’s homelands resulting in increasing ethnic Vietnamese immigration and economic expansion that marginalizes the indigenous Degar Montagnards. These long term systematic human rights violations combined with the ongoing political and religious repression (arrests, torture, killings and imprisonment) has resulted in what looks nothing short of a blueprint for genocide of one of Asia’s oldest indigenous races of people.



Section 4: Vietnam's Blueprint for Ethnic Cleansing

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 this 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 killings, have been directed and negatively impacted against this 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 currently remain in prison. The latest killings of Degar Christians includes the 22 June 2008 killings of two Degar Christians attacked by security forces for attending a prayer vigil and a number of killings in April 2008 including the murder of two children. A Degar man (whose photo of his corpse is on the cover of this report) named Y Ben Hdok was murdered by security police on 28 April 2008 who placed a rope around his neck and dragged him by a vehicle until he died.

Persecution continues against the Degar population and the latest large scale unrest in the region occurred this year in April 2008 when thousands of Degars in their villages publicly protested against the ongoing ethnic, religious and political repression. See: <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/full/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 the categories of human rights violations document 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 including 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. In the first section below titled “Extrajudicial Killings” the details of 51 killings of Degars are documented with much details provided by the victims families.

All the victims had been either arrested, tortured and killed in various ways by Vietnamese authorities and all died for religious or political reasons and none had committed any acts of violence. Some were Christian house church preachers, others were human rights defenders. Some were deliberately beaten (repeatedly) to cause a slow death from internal injuries. This list is in no way complete, however, for example dozens of unidentified Degars were killed during the mass 2004 Easter prayer gathering. Vietnam also undertakes extraordinary security measures to prevent word of human rights abuses from reaching the international community including the monitoring of cell phone communications.

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

- The US State Department described the 30 July 2006 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

NO. 50 AND 51: JUNE 22, 2008 THE DEATH OF “A LAT” AND “A BRIN”

Prayer vigil ambushed by Security Forces and two Christians murdered. On June 22, 2008, approximately 38 Degar Catholic believers attempted to travel in canoes to a sacred place to conduct a prayer vigil. As is their custom, our Catholic Christian brothers and sisters took canoes to cross to the other side of a lake to pray at this particular site. But, when they got close to the other side of the lake the Vietnamese security police ambushed them by pelting them with heavy rocks. While the Degar Catholics were still in their canoes, the Vietnamese security police (who also encouraged Vietnamese civilians to do so) began throwing rocks at them. Two of our Christian brothers, **A Lat** age 61 and **A Brin** age 46, were hit by heavy rocks on their heads and both men fell into the lake and died. Both of the men are from the village of Plei Kuk Gyer, commune of An Thanh, district of Dak Bo in the province of Gialai. The families wished to bury their dead at that site where Mary came to them in a vision because the men were killed for their Christian faith. The Vietnamese security forces however, forced them to carry the corpses back to their village for burial.

NO. 49: APRIL 28, 2008: THE DEATH OF “Y BEN HDOK”

Vietnamese security police murdered a Degar Christian named Y Ben Hdok by torture and by tying a rope around his neck dragging him with their jeep until he died. Photo on the left is with his family and the photo on right is his corpse after being murdered by security police.



On April 28, 2008 the Vietnamese security police arrested Y-Ben Hdok for trying to flee to Cambodia and took him to a secluded place where they beat him 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 marks on his body were clearly visible to his wife and parents when they cleaned his body before the burial. Some of the police involved in the killing were ethnic Degar and thus told the family that 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. When his corpse was brought to his village the security police threatened the family from taking pictures. 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 threatened the family, ordering them not to tell anyone, including 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

Y Ben Hdok' daughter sits on her fathers grave



NO. 47 AND 48: APRIL 14, 2008 THE DEATH OF “Y SONG NIE” AND “Y HUANG NIE”

Two Degar Christians brutally tortured to death by security police who paid their families \$66 USA, a bag of rice, one coffin and one grave as compensation for the murders. On 14 April 2008, two Degar (Montagnard) Christians named **Y-Song Nie** and **Y-Huang Nie** were returning to their village after having participated in a peaceful protest for the release of their two Christian sisters and one Christian brother, who were arrested earlier on the 9th of April in 2008, at the commune of Ia Ken. On this day the 14th of April 2008 the Vietnamese security police arrested and savagely killed **Y-Song Nie** and **Y-Huang Nie**. The security police broke both of their legs, both their hands and cracked their skulls. After murdering them, the security police returned the bodies to their family village and admitted murdering Y-Song Nie and Y-Huang Nie. The security police ordered their families to bury the corpses in one grave and provided them with one coffin for both corpses, one 100Kg bag of rice and one million 1,000,000 dong (Vietnamese currency which is worth about \$66.00 USD) for each family. The security police forced the family to bury both of the dead in one grave and threatened the families, saying *“If anyone of you reports this incident to the international community or to Kok Ksor, we will come and kill all of you.”* The names and details of the victims are as follows:

1. **Y-Song Nie**, age 24 from the village of Buon Pok, commune Ea Ken, district Krong Pac in Daklak province. He is married with children and they will now have to suffer without a husband and father for the rest of their lives.

2. **Y-Huang Nie**, age 23 from the village of Buon Kreh, commune Ea Ken, district Krong Pac in Daklak province. He was married with children and his family also will have to suffer without a husband and father for the rest of their lives.

NO. 45 AND 46: APRIL 14, 2008 THE DEATH OF “Y THIEP MLO” AND “Y BUI NIE”

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 government. Degar victims are commonly sent to prison, tortured and killed whenever they dare to report a crime committed by a Vietnamese person.

NO. 44: MARCH 17, 2008 THE DEATH OF “RAHLAN HEN”

Christian prisoner dies from Abuse and Torture: Our Christian brother, **Rahlan Hen**, is from the village of Ploi Beng, in the commune of Ia Cia, from the district of Ia Grai in the province of Gialai. Rahlan Hen was a simple man who belonged to the Degar church in his village of Ploi Beng. His troubles all began when he refused to join Siu Kim’s church, which is the government sanctioned church. On June 14, 2006, the Vietnamese government sent security police along with riot police to his house and arrested him. They handcuffed him and began to beat and kick him severely. They dragged him from his house, stomping on him with their heavy military boots until he lost consciousness, and then threw his body in their jeep and took him to the district of Ia Grai prison. At this prison facility, the security police repeatedly beat and tortured him; they kicked, punched, stomped on and shocked him with electric rods. Rahlan Hen was sentenced to prison for 6 years and was then transferred to the T-20 facility in Pleiku. He was later transferred to another prison facility in the province of Phu Yen. In Rahlan Hen’s case, each time they moved him, they tortured him and when he did not die, they tried to feed him poisoned food. When his wife went to see him at the Phu Yen province prison, one of his legs was paralyzed and he could barely walk. She was overcome with sorrow, but could do nothing to help him. On March 17, 2008, the security police from the province of Phu Yen summoned his wife because Rahlan Hen was sick. When she arrived, the security police informed her that he was dead. They took his wife to the burial site and opened the coffin so that she could see her husband’s face for the last time. Rahlan Hen’s wife then begged the security police to allow her to take her husband’s corpse back home so that his relatives could also see his face for the last time. This practice is an important part of the Degar culture, but the security police refused. They told her *“he has been sentenced to 6 years in prison so you can come back and pick up his bones in three more years after he had finished his prison term.”*

NO. 43: 10 FEBRUARY 2008 - THE DEATH OF KPA KLOH.

Christian prisoner dies from torture and abuse: Kpa Kloh died from torture on 10 February 2008. He was born on June 12, 1966 and from the village of Ploi Ring commune of Hbong district of Cu Se in the

province of Gialai. On October 12, 2004, he was arrested, tortured and then sent to Phu Yen province prison because for preaching about Christianity and for attending the Easter prayer vigil in April of 2004. After his arrest, the Vietnamese security police tortured him by beatings and kicking. They struck him repeatedly with their batons and shocked his body with electric batons. It seems as if they wanted to kill him because seeing that he has not died as of July 8, 2007, they intensified the torture. They beat him on his head with their police batons until blood came out of his ears, nose and mouth and he fell unconscious. The authorities tortured him again on December 10, 2007 and again on February 9, 2008. Brother Kpa Kloh died on February 10, 2008 from the repeated torture by Vietnamese security police at the Phu Yen province prison. He leaves behind his wife R'mah H'Ne and six children.

NO. 42: OCTOBER 5, 2007: THE DEATH OF Y MPI



Prison Photo: A Degar Montagnard man named **Y Mpi** died on October 5, 2007 having never recovered from abuse and 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 because he had participated in the peaceful demonstration on Easter 2004. His health deteriorated and fearing he would die in custody he was released. He spent his remaining days near at Kien Giang Hospital close to Ho Chi Minh City. Authorities refused to allow his torture body to be photographed. The treatment he received in prison was horrific and he never recovered.

NO. 41: OCTOBER 1, 2007: THE DEATH OF SIU BLOK



Degar House Church Christian Preacher man named Siu Blok (left) died from torture by Vietnamese authorities. He was videotaped giving an illegal prayer blessing and reported to police by another religious group who are sanctioned by the government. It is Vietnam's plan to "divide and conquer" the independent house Churches by pitting Church against Church. Siu Blok was born in 1953 and from Ploi Breng 1 village, Ia Der commune, Ia Grai district in Gialai province. He was buried on 4 October 2007. His story is as follows: On 3 June 2006, a Degar Christian believer named Ksor H'Wan, invited preacher Siu Blok to conduct a prayer blessing at her new house in her village. Siu Blok agreed and went to her house to conduct the blessing. During the prayer service a Degar man who had been working for the state sanctioned Church named Ksor Chiar, video taped the ceremony and gave the tape to his boss Siu Kim who is the head preacher with the state sanctioned Church. Siu Kim then gave this tape to the security police (Cong An) and the next day, the

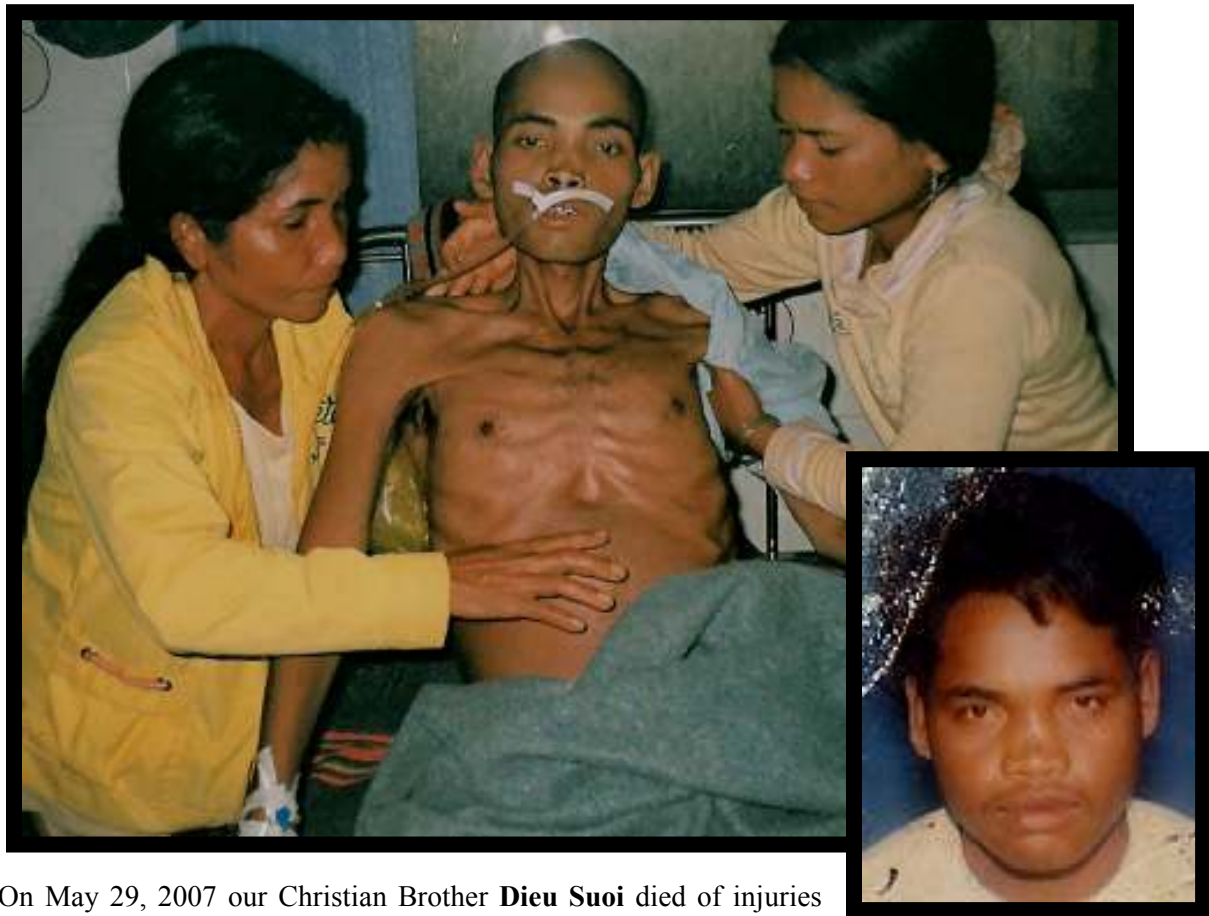
security police from the commune summoned Siu Blok to report to them for interrogation. On June 22, 2006 at approximately 8:30 am two Vietnamese security police from Ia Grai district named **Thanh** and **Bang** arrested Siu Blok. They took him to the prison called T-20 in Pleiku city. On June 3, 2007 the Vietnamese government put Siu Blok on trial at the commune of Ia Der and proceedings went from 7:00 am to 12:00 noon and he was sentenced to 8 years in prison. The trial was watched by his family and other Christians. Siu Blok was then taken back to prison T-20 in Pleiku city. His crime was that he wanted to overthrow the Vietnamese government. Evidence used to convict Siu Blok in the trial was testimony by security police from Gialai province who stated that six Degars from the state approved Church had signed papers stating they wanted the preacher Siu Blok imprisoned for illegal Church activity. Subsequently the government transferred Siu Blok from T-20 prison to the prison in Phu Yen province. Siu Blok was tortured brutally with severe beatings until he became seriously injured. When he arrived at Phu Yen prison the chief of the prison guard rejected to accept him and asked the security police "why do you guys bring this prisoner here when he is dying?" The security police then took Siu Blok to the hospital in Phu Yen province. Here the security police called Siu Blok's wife to care for him and he was hospitalized there about one month. During this time his hands were handcuffed and his feet chained to the hospital bed. Whilst in hospital he reported details of his torture to his family and told them he would not live long because the security police had crushed his chest having broken all his ribs during torture sessions. Eventually the doctors told the police that they cannot treat Siu Blok anymore as he was dying and the security police issued him release papers to return home for treatment. The paper stated if he recovers after 9 months the security police will re-arrest him and send him back to prison to finish his prison term. 2 September 2007 Siu Blok was released to his village but placed under house arrest with security police guarding him the day and soldiers also surrounding his house at night. **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. One of the security police told them "You've already got his photo while he is alive why do you need his photo when he is dead?" Security police and numerous soldiers remained in the village until Siu Blok's body was buried on October 4, 2007.

NO. 40: AUGUST 24, 2007: THE DEATH OF KPA KIN

Degar prisoner dies in prison from torture and abuse: On 24 August 2007 our Degar Montagnard Christian brother named **Kpa Kin** who was born in 1972 at Ploi Tao Or village, commune Ia Hru, district Cu Se in Gialai province died in the hospital at Phu Yen province from torture perpetrated by Vietnamese authorities in the prison. His story is as follows: Kpa Kin had participated in the peaceful demonstration in April 2004 calling for religious freedom and land rights and ever since the Vietnamese police had sought to arrest him. Kpa Kin had however, then fled into hiding in the jungle but on December 16, 2005 the Vietnamese security police caught him and imprisoned him in Cu Se district. During his arrest he was brutally tortured. Later Kpa Kin was moved to the prison called T-20 in Pleiku province and finally he was moved to the prison in Phu Yen province. Each time he was moved, the authorities repeatedly tortured him by beating him with batons, boxing, kicking and electric shocking him over his body. Due to his injuries he suffered from the torture Kpa Kin became seriously ill and was taken to the hospital in Phu Yen province. At the hospital, the doctors could not treat him due to his deteriorating condition so they requested he be sent home to spend his final days with his family. However, Kpa Kin died before being released on August 24, 2007. His wife and family then asked if they could bring his corpse home for a decent burial but this request was refused. The Security police however, taunted Kpa Kin's family. The authorities told his grieving relatives that since he was sentenced to 3 years in prison and has not yet finished his prison term, the authorities will bury his body at the prison and - then after his 3 year prison term is over, they can collect his corpse.

NO. 39: MAY 29, 2007: THE DEATH OF DIEU SUOI

Photo taken after his release from prison. The inset photo was taken before his arrest.



On May 29, 2007 our Christian Brother **Dieu Suoi** died of injuries caused by severe torture he received from Vietnam's police and prison officials. He was crippled and his body was almost beyond recognition to his family and he died within two days of his release. He was born in 1976 at Buon Budap village, commune Nhan Co, district Dak Rlap in Daknong province. On September 14, 2005 however, security police from the district arrested him in his village because he was a house church Christian who refused to join the official church and because he supported the Montagnard Foundation. The police tied him up and brought him in front of the villagers and began striking him with their hands and kicking and stomping him with their boots. They also electric shocked him and beat him with batons until he was unconscious, whereupon they threw him in their truck and took him to the prison in Daknong province. The security police threatened all the villagers stating they will be treated the same if they don't join the official church or dare ever follow the Montagnard Foundation. On April 20, 2006 **Dieu Suoi** was sentenced from 2 to 3 years in prison for resisting the Vietnamese government and sent to prison in Phu Yen province. He was then repeatedly tortured in prison and by May 2007 his health deteriorated to the point he could no longer walk or stand upright. On May 27, 2007 the security police from Phu Yen province with police from Daknong province and police from Hanoi central government brought him to his wife and parents. His family could barely recognize him and seeing his tortured body demanded the police take him to hospital. His distraught parents stated to the police that *"You arrested my son for no reason, you tortured him and when he is dieing you bring him back to us. You are murderers you must treat him and bring him back to us alive"*.

The police did take **Dieu Suoi** to the hospital in Daknong province but two days later on the morning of May 29, 2007 he died in the hospital. He was 30 years old and was buried by his family on May 30, 2007

NO. 38: MAY 3, 2007: THE DEATH OF SIU H'KRONG

Unnecessary surgery and racism: On May 3, 2007 our Christian sister **Siu H'Krong** died at her home after leaving hospital after undergoing unnecessary surgery. Her story is as follows: **Siu H'Krong** (female age 55) was from Plei Kte village, district Ayun Pa in Gialai province. On March 10, 2007 she



went to the doctor at Ceo-Reo city for stomach pains but the nurse told her to come back 9 days later on March 19, 2007. Siu H'Krong went home and returned on the 19th but the doctor sent her to Pleiku city hospital without examining her. When Siu H'Krong finally arrived at Pleiku hospital on March 20, 2007 she met Dr. La Van Thang one of the chief doctors. Dr. La Van Thang took her hand and put her into surgery without any examination or X-rays and began surgery on her stomach where the pain appeared to be. After the operation, Dr. La Van Thang told her he could not find anything wrong. Siu H'Krong was extremely upset and her family feels she was merely experimented on. She became worse and stayed at the hospital 8 days. She was released on March 29, 2007 but died over a month later on May 3, 2007. Her family fears that she was experimented on and did not receive proper medical care.

NO. 37: APRIL 10, 2007: THE DEATH OF RAHLAN LUA

A Degar Montagnard Christian named **Rahlan Lua** (age 43) from the village of Bon Toat, Ia Siem commune, Krong Pa district in Gialai province died on April 10, 2007 from torture and maltreatment he received in prison. He was brutally beaten many times whilst in custody and police had targeted him for re-arrest. He had long suffered internal injuries from torture and his village state he was marked for death by security police. His story is as follows: Rahlan Lua was first arrested, tortured and then sent to Ha Nam prison on December 18, 2001 because of his involvement with the peaceful demonstration calling for religious freedom and land rights in February of 2001. He was released on July 15, 2005 but re-arrested, tortured again and sent to the prison facility in the province of Tuy Hoa on November 5, 2005. His health started to deteriorate and he was later released on February 18, 2007 but died on April 10, 2007. His village reports that the Vietnamese security police arrested and tortured him the second time to make sure that he would certainly die when he gets home. He was buried on April 12, 2007.

NO. 36: MARCH 2007: THE DEATH OF Y-GAN MLO

Y-Gan Mlo was 18 years old when he DIED OF POISONING committed by Vietnamese government police. He was born on March 20, 1988 from Buon Cuor Knia village, commune Ea Bar, district Buon Don, Buonmathuot City in Dak Lak province. He was arrested and subsequently poisoned after being interrogated by police about his knowledge of his older brother Y-Pho Mlo who had previously escaped to Cambodia as a refugee. Details of his arrest and death are as follows: On June 21, 2006 the Vietnamese police arrested Y-Gan Mlo from his classroom at the school of Truong Trung Tam Giao Duc Thuong Xuyen in the city of Buonmathuot. They took him to their headquarters at Buon Don District where they

detained him for three days. During this time Y-Gan Mlo was not allowed any contact with his family and his arrest was kept secret. The police harshly interrogated him for three days about details on how his brother had escaped to Cambodia. After three days he was sent back to school. On July 8, 2006 less than a month later after his first arrest the security police re-arrested him. This time he was interrogated for two days about his brother. Before releasing him to return back to school the police forced him to eat some food on July 10, 2006. We repeat that the police *forced him to eat food* before releasing him. That night around 1am, Y-Gan Mlo experienced severe pain in his abdomen and his friends immediately rushed him to a near-by hospital. After examination, the nurse explained that there were traces of some unknown drug in his system. The nurse then asked him if he had taken any kind of drug. Y-Gan Mlo replied “no” and reported he had eaten food while in police custody that day. The nurse gave him two shots for the pain and then sent him back to school. The pain in his abdomen became worse until he vomited blood, urinated and defecated blood. His parents then took him to the hospital in the province but the doctor said they could not treat him so they took him to the hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Over the months Y Gan Mlo never recovered and his family spent great deal of money seeking medical help but the doctors were unable to find out what was wrong with him. Y Gan Mlo’s health deteriorated more and he died in March 2007. Y-Gan Mlo died and was buried on March 18, 2007. He was 18 years old and in good health until the police forced him to eat food in custody.

NO. 35: MARCH 18, 2007: THE DEATH OF Y-KUO NIE

A Degar Montagnard Christian (age 53) from the village of Buon Cu Mil, commune of Ea Trun, district of Krong Bong in the province of Daklak died at around 8 am on March 18, 2007 after he was released from prison. His story is as follows: Y-Kuo Nie was first arrested, tortured and sent to prison facility in Ha Nam province on February 16, 2001 for his involvement with peaceful demonstration calling for religious freedom and land rights in February 2001. Due to the severity and repeated torture he endured the Vietnamese security police knew he was going to die, so, the police called his wife to go pick up her husband from Ha Nam prison. However, Y-Kuo’s wife, H’Long Buonya, was so poor and could not afford to travel to Han Nam even though she so wanted to. Eventually the Vietnamese security police brought her husband home to his village on March 17, 2007. When Y-Kuo Nie was reunited with his family on March 17, 2007 his health was extremely bad and he told his wife and children he had been tortured many times in prison. He requested a Christian preacher to pray with him before he dies. After his preacher had prayed for him that day, the next morning of March 18, 2007, at around 8 o’clock he died. Security police kept a close watch on the funeral but before Y-Kuo Nie’s corpse was placed in the coffin his wife cleaned his body and dressed him in new clothes. She then discovered that most of her husband’s ribs were broken and his body covered in bruises. Y-Kuo Nie was buried on March 21, 2007 and appears to have died from prolonged abuse and internal injuries.

NO. 34 AND NO. 33: THE DEATH OF H’POWEL EBAN AND H’WOT BUONKRONG

After visiting relatives in prison a military truck swerved into van. Survivors state it was a deliberate ambush. On 14 March 2007 twelve relatives of Degar prisoners traveled to the notorious Vietnamese prison in the province of Ha Nam to visit their loved ones who were imprisoned there. The prisoners were religious and political prisoners who were imprisoned for non -violent offences. Unfortunately, two of these twelve relatives and their Vietnamese driver were killed by an intentional and cleverly arranged “accident” in order to cover up the intimidation and criminal acts committed by the prison authorities against the prisoner’s relatives. Prior to the trip the prisoner’s relatives had applied for permission with the local police to visit the prison but the police were not happy with the application and strongly discouraged them from going. The relatives insisted and reluctantly the police issued them travel permits. On 14 March 2007 the prisoner’s relatives left Buonmathuot City and arrived in Ha Nam province on 15 March 2007. After a few hours visiting with their loves one at the prison, the relatives began their journey home on the same day March 15, 2007. When they arrived in Ky Anh district in the province of Ha Nam (where the head quarters of the Vietnamese security police are located) a large army truck coming from the opposite direction swerved in their direction towards their van. The van driver

tried to avoid the collision but was unable to escape and the truck crashed into them driving their van off the road, killing the driver and 2 Degar women who were sitting next to the driver. The rest of the passengers incurred serious injuries (except one named Y-Mika Buonya who incurred minor injuries). The Vietnamese driver's name is not known at this time but the two Degar women are named H'Powel Nie and H'Wot Buonkrong. The surviving witnesses reported that the large heavily built truck deliberately swerved towards them and crashed into their smaller van and then police extorted money from them if they wanted to bring the dead bodies back to their villages for burial. Police also tried extorting money from the victims. Security police then pulled two of the dead Degar women out of the wreckage and put their corpses in coffins along the road side. The police then refused to permit the victims friends and family from taking the bodies back to their village unless they pay them 25,000,000 in Vietnamese money. The two victims killed are:

- ❑ **H'Powel Eban** (female - **KILLED 15 March 2007**) was born in 1972, from the village of Buon Buor Draï Hling, commune of Hoa Xuan, district of Cu Jut, province of Daknong. She wanted to visit her husband Y-Yuan Buonya who has been imprisoned at the prison facility in Ha Nam. She has four children ages from 14, 10, 6 and 4 year old.
- ❑ **H'Wot Buonkrong** (female - **KILLED 15 March 2007**) was born in 1962, from the village of Buon Cuorknia, commune of Eabar, district of Buondon, province of Daklak. She wanted to visit her brother Y-Hoang Buonkrong who has been imprisoned at the prison facility in the province of Ha Nam.

NO. 32: OCTOBER 22, 2006: THE DEATH OF MOI

House Church Christian abducted and murdered (hanged). On October 22, 2006 at 8pm a Degar Montagnard Christian named Moi went to the latrine near his village yet failed to return. The entire village searched for him but could not find him. Later that next morning two Vietnamese police named Can and Thai, came to the village and told the villagers Moi was dead and hanging from a tree about 1km from the village. The whole village rushed to where the police said his body was and found Moi hanging on a tree tied up with Vietnamese military issue shoestrings. Moi's skull was cracked, both arms broken and his body was covered in bruises and cutmarks. People from his village reported that Vietnamese officials had long hated Moi because he was a Christian who refused to join the official church.

NO. 31: AUGUST 30, 2006: THE DEATH OF KSOR THUP (PRISON PHOTO)



On August 30, 2006 our Christian Brother, **Ksor Thup** died in Trai Ba Sao prison in Ha Nam due to severe torture. He was born in 1952, from Plei Dop village, Kon Gang commune, Dak Doa district, GiaLai province. He was arrested on March 24, 2004 and 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. It was well known he was severely tortured in prison. His wife and relatives asked officials if they could collect his body for burial but were refused this request. We strongly believe the reason why the Vietnamese officials refused the request is that they did not want his family and relatives to find out what they had done to Ksor Thup. On September 1, 2006 his village however, buried his clothes instead and mourned for him according to our customs. The photo here is the burial ceremony of Ksor Thup in Ha Nam province.

NO. 30: JULY 13, 2006: THE DEATH OF Y NGO ADRONG



The US State Department described the killing of Degar Montagnard Christian named **Y Ngo Adrong** (left) as “a credible report of extrajudicial killing by security forces” (See: 6 March 2007 US State Department’s Report on Vietnam). He was 49 years old and from Dak Lak Province and was tortured to death in the police interrogation room at Ea H’Leo District, Dak Lak Province. Details of his death are: Y Ngo Adrong was summoned by police to attend the police station at Ea H’Leo district on 13 July 2006 for interrogation about his Christian house church activities. He attended the police station at 7:30 am on this date of 13 July 2006. At (approx) 11am the police from Ea H’Leo district went to Y Ngo Adrong’s village of Buon Le and told his family that he had hung himself at the police station. On 14 July 2006 his body was transferred to the morgue, where one of his relatives brought his body to the village of Buon Blec, the village of his birth. Dozens of police surrounded the village, preventing nearby villagers from attending the funeral.

The police also prevented his family from inspecting his body and refused to allow his family to remove his clothing. Family members wanted to see his wounds but police refused to permit relatives to get near the body and kept close watch over the funeral. The police gave his family 15 million Vietnamese dong in compensation and admitted they were wrong in causing his death. The police refused however, to provide details of what happened in the interrogation room. The family, wife and children of Y Ngo Adrong however, suffer great emotional pain. Y Ngo Adrong was born in 1957 at Buon Blec village, but at the time of his arrest was living in his wife’s village of Buon Le.

NO. 29: JUNE 2006: THE DEATH OF SIU DOLEL

Our Christian Brother, Siu Dolel, was born in 1955, from Ploi Oi village, Ia Ke commune, Ayun Pa district, Gialai province. He was arrested, tortured and imprisoned in Ha Nam on December 22, 2004. According to our contacts, in May 2006, the prison authorities tortured him again by kicking, boxing and beating him with electric batons until his right and left rib cage were broken. On 25 June 2006, Vietnamese officials came to his wife house and told her that her husband had died in prison and asked her if she wanted to see his body before burial. Unfortunately, his wife did not have money to go see him and so the officials then confiscated his identification card from her and left.



NO. 28: MAY 31, 2006 THE DEATH OF KHON

On 31 May 2006 a Montagnard Degar Christian named **Khon** died from torture having never recovered his mental faculties: On 30 April 2004 the Vietnamese police had arrested a Montagnard Degar Christian named Khon (age 33) and imprisoned him at the prison facility Dak Trung in Daklak province. Khon was from the village of Ploi Hdok, A-Dok commune, Dak Doa District, Gialai province and had participated

in the peaceful demonstration on Easter 2004 with thousands of other Degar people. He was perfectly healthy prior to his arrest but was tortured severely with electric shock and beatings. His health deteriorated and authorities feared he would die in custody so they released him on December 30, 2005. When Khon was returned to his village he could not recognize his family and he was suffering severe brain damage and appeared mentally insane. He was also reported to have been injected with unknown drugs whilst in custody. Khon never regained his senses and he died painfully on 31 May 2006.

NO. 27: APRIL 20, 2006: THE DEATH OF SIU LUL

On 20 April 2006 Siu Lul a Degar Christian was denied food and water by Vietnamese authorities in Ha Nam prison who also commenced beating and torturing him. He was 62 years old and from the village of Ploi Kueng, Habong commune, Cu Se District, Gia Lai Province. He had been arrested, tortured and imprisoned at the prison facility in Ha Nam since 2004. On April 24, 2006 he succumbed and died from the effects of torture and abuse. The authorities wanted the family to take his body back to his village but his family did not have money to pay for the transportation so he was buried in Ha Nam.

NO. 26 AND 25: 2006: THE DEATH OF TWO UNIDENTIFIED DEGAR MONTAGNARDS

Several Degar Montagnard prisoners have reported to the Montagnard Foundation that they saw 11 Degar prisoners being tortured at the same time other Degar Montagnards in Ha Nam prison. They also reported seeing two Degar prisoners from Daklak province killed in custody and that their bodies were taken outside of the prison for burial. The names of these victims is unknown.

NO. 24: OCTOBER 10, 2005: THE DEATH OF RO- O H'YUR

On 5 May 2005 Vietnam police in Cheo Reo district gave poisoned food to the Degar woman named **Ro-o H'Yur**. She immediately became ill with internal pains. She remained ill off and on over the next few months. On 10 October 2005 villagers took her to the hospital however, the Vietnamese Doctor refused to treat her because her husband Ksor Ni was a refugee currently residing in the United States. Blood was flowing from Ro-o H'Yur's nose and mouth and she died on 10 October 2005 leaving behind five children with no one to care for them because their father is a exiled refugee and their Uncle Ksor Krok is serving a 7 year prison sentence for trying to flee the country. The Grandmother Ksor H'Ble is over 80 years old and has suffered torture, beatings by Vietnamese police. The surviving children's names are: Ro-o Loi (age 23), Ro-o Ri (age 19), Ro-o H'Nhuon (age 16), Ro-o Ra (age 9) and Ro-o Lina (age 7).

No. 23: JULY 8, 2005: THE DEATH OF SIU SUEK On 8 July 2005 a Montagnard man (name withheld) from the village in Cu Se District, Gia Lai Province was out gathering food and hunting for squirrels and jungle rats when he came upon numerous Vietnamese soldiers' footprints. He followed the footprints out of curiosity until he came upon a dead body with numerous bruises, blood stains and evidence of torture. He went back to his village and alerted the villagers who went with him to identify the body. The villagers recognized the dead person as "Siu Suek" (40 years old) from the village of Plei Lao, Nhan Hoa Commune, Cu Prong District, Gia Lai Province. The villagers and family of "Siu Suek" stated that the day before he had gone to visit relatives who live at the village of Plei Pior but that he was detained by a group of Vietnamese soldiers who then commenced beating him. The next time they saw "Siu Suek" was when his dead body was found covered in bruises in the jungle.

NO. 22) DECEMBER 5, 2005: THE DEATH OF Y KUOT ENUOL



Y-Kuot Enuol (male) age 41 from the village of Buon Dha Prong, Buonmathuot City in the province of Daklak was arrested, tortured and sent to prison facility in the province of Ha Nam on May 13, 2001 because of his involvement with the peaceful demonstration in February 2001. He was later released from prison in early 2004 but the security police re-arrested him again on July 18, 2004 and sent him to prison at Dai Phat Thanh in the city of Buonmathuot, Daklak province. Here the

security police tortured him severely by tying up his hands and feet and hanging him upside down and then used their martial arts on him including boxing and kicking on his body and face until he was unconscious. The police then untied him, dropped him down and poured water on him to revive him. Once he awoke the police repeated the torture again and again. After this brutal torture, Y-Kuot Enuol had difficulties breathing and the police feared he would die in prison so they released him to his family on July 28, 2004. At his village home, his family spent all their earnings and what they could find to treat him, but in the following five months there was nothing that could help him. On December 5, 2004 he died and was buried on December 10, 2004. The security police then threatened his family not to tell anyone about what had happened to Y-Kuot Enuol or they too will also be tortured and killed by the police.

NO. 21 -12: APRIL 2004: THE DEATH OF 10 DEGAR MONTAGNARDS

Human Rights Watch confirmed the deaths of at least 10 Degar Montagnards by Vietnamese security forces who attacked peaceful Christian demonstrators. One of the victims received a fatal gunshot wound to the head and the others from beatings. Hundreds were beaten and wounded. Amnesty International also reported at least eight Degar Montagnards killed. (See Human Rights Watch briefing paper of January 2005) http://hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/vietnam0105/4.htm#_Toc92870686

NO. 11: DECEMBER 13, 2003: THE DEATH OF NIH

At 7:00 pm in the evening, a group of paramilitary police officers from Dak Dao District surrounded the village of Plei O Dot in the Commune of Ia Bang, Dak Dao District, Gia Lai Province and arrested 2 villagers named “Nih” (41 years old) and “So” (44 years old). They both were Christians. Both of them were taken to the prison in the district of Dak Doa and tortured by beatings, kicking and electric shock. “Nih” refused to answer questions or renounce Christ and Major Tuan from Dak Doa police took a knife and stabbed him in his chest and then cut his throat. On December 15, 2003, the police took the body of Nih to his family at Plei O Dot but refused to allow the family to perform the funeral and stated they wanted the villagers to see what happens to those who the government does not like. “Nih” was a Christian and had been helping to feed refugees who were hiding in the area.

NO. 10: MARCH 26, 2003: THE DEATH OF SUOC

Approximately 50 Vietnamese soldiers and security forces conducted a sweeping operation in the area of Dir Tok, Ia Pet commune, Dak Doa district, Gia Lai province in March 2003. At 7:00 am just West of Plei Bia Bre about 700 meters they encountered a group of Degar people who were walking to the Ia Tor river for bathing. The soldiers opened fire at these unarmed civilian Degar people and wounded two of them but the other 7 ran away. The soldiers took the wounded to the commune office. One of the two wounded died and they took his body to his family at the hamlet of Plei Nglom Thung for burial. The family of the dead examined the body and they found out that his skull had been crushed. They concluded he died not because of the bullet wound but because of being severely beaten after he was wounded. The name of the dead Degar Montagnard is **Suoc** who was born in 1962, from the hamlet of Plei Nglom Thung, Ia Pet commune, Dak Doa district, Gia Lai province. The name of the other Degar Montagnard who was wounded and captured is R’com Hui who was born in 1962, from the hamlet of Plei Khun, Tra Ba commune, Pleiku city, Gia Lai province. Human Rights Watch confirmed this killing and stated in its 21 April 2003 report that, *“When his body was returned to his family, his skull had been severely crushed, apparently from additional beatings by security officers at the commune center”*.

NO. 9 – 7: FEBRUARY 27, 2003: THE DEATHS OF THREE DEGAR MONTAGNARDS

Eyes cut out after execution: At the ‘secret’ military camp at Buon Cu Mblim, Krong Ana district, Dak Lac province Vietnamese soldiers executed 3 Montagnards whose names are unknown on 27 February 2003. The soldiers summoned approximately 100 villagers to look at them telling the villagers “this is how you are going to end up if you follow Kok Ksor and the Montagnard Foundation”. The soldiers also told the villages not to believe in Christ as it was against the teachings of Ho Chi Minh. The villagers

stated that the eyes of the 3 victims had been cut out. The soldiers then buried the dead bodies outside the camp with their feet protruding from the ground warning the villagers not to approach them.

NO. 6: JANUARY 31, 2003: THE DEATH OF Y SU NIE



Vietnamese authorities tortured and executed **Y-Su Nie** a Degar Montagnard Christian after injecting him with lethal chemicals on 31 January 2003. He was from Buon Mbhao village, Mdrak district, Dak Lak province and had been in prison since 15 November 2002 when soldiers arrested him for being a Christian. He was taken to Buonmathuot prison and tortured by beatings and electric shock. He was routinely taken out of prison to publicly denounce Kok Ksor and Christianity in front of Degar villagers. On January 30, 2003 they handcuffed him and told him he “would soon die, but because the Vietnamese government is merciful we will allow you to see your family one last time”. Then they injected him with a chemical and released him. When Y-Su Nie saw his family he cried and told them “the government let me come to see you for only a few moments because the police had injected poison in my body”. The next day on January 31, 2003, Y-Su Nie died at 10:00 PM.

NO. 5, 4 AND 3: OCTOBER 29, 2002: THE DEATHS OF Y SUON MLO, Y HET NIE KDAM & Y WAN AYUN

Vietnamese Security Forces executed by lethal injection in their prison cells 3 Degar Montagnard Christians named: **Y-Suon Mlo**, from Buon Kuang village, **Y-Het Nie Kdam**, from Buon Ea Tieu and **Y-Wan Ayun**, from Buon Gram village, Daklak province. These Degars were executed for taking part in the peaceful demonstrations of February 2001 and injected by prison authorities with an unknown drug and died in convulsing spasms within minutes on 29 October 2002.

NO. 2: MARCH 2001: THE DEATH OF RMAH BLIM



A Degar Christian named **Rmah Blim** was shot and killed by police while Vietnamese authorities were burning down a Christian church at Plei Lao village. (photo of arrests). Authorities burned down the village church and the BBC ran a story “Fury at Vietnam Church Destruction” on 28 March 2001. The US State Dept. confirmed his killing and reported 1- 5 Degars Christians killed.

NO. 1: OCTOBER 19, 2000: THE DEATH OF Y HONG NIE. Vietnamese authorities arrested Y Hong Nie a Degar Montagnard from Buon Cu Po hamlet in the village of Cu Ewi in Dak Lak province, Central Highlands. His crime was that he refused to give his ancestral lands over to the communist authorities. The police had previously threatened Y-Hong Nie and said they would kill him. This time they came and carried out their threats. Y-Hong Nie's wife stood by helplessly as her husband was dragged from their longhouse. He has never been again by his family and Y-Hong Nie's farm is now under the control of the Vietnamese government.

IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE

- The US State Department reported in March 2007 that Vietnam, “*continued to impose extra security measures in the central highlands*” and “*The government also used other decrees, ordinances, and measures, such as Article 88, to detain activists for the peaceful expression of opposing political views*”. See: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100543.htm>
- “Degar Montagnard Torture Victims Speak Out” see Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOSKDjYPyXU>
- Human Rights Identified over 350 Degar Montagnard political and religious prisoners see: <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2006/06/14/vietna13542.htm> and Amnesty International on May 2008 identified “*hundreds*” of Degar prisoners being held in Vietnamese custody.

Since the year 2000, thousands of Degar Montagnards have been arrested, in what can be described as a resurgence 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.

It is noted that on 27 April 2001 the AFP (*Vietnam Settling Soldiers, Militiamen in Restive Central Highlands*, AFP 27 April 2001) reported that a total of 13 regiments and 20,000 households were occupied by security forces in the Central Highlands. Today 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 of those killed is unknown as the Central Highland region remains largely cordoned off from independent monitors and official restrictions are placed upon the press and foreign delegations.

As noted previously Human Rights Watch has documented over 350 Degar prisoners with the latest reported sentencing of Degars occurring in August 2008 (Associated Press 3 August 2008) with four more Degars being sentenced to prison terms. Many of these prisoners are convicted in secret one-day trials on trumped-up charges relating to peaceful protests for human rights, for advocating Christianity or for attempting to flee to Cambodia. The horrors inside the prisons are appalling and MFI has documented specific details of torture perpetrated by Vietnamese authorities including beatings and electric shock torture as reported in the following examples of religious and political persecution against Degars.

BEATEN & TORTURED – CRIPPLED – SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS IMPRISONMENT



Bom (Jona) was born in 1956, from Ploi Kueng Grai village, commune Ha Bau, district Dak Doa, GiaLai province. He was arrested and tortured on February 6, 2001 for participating in the peaceful demonstrations of February 2001. On September 26, 2001 he was tried at a local court in Gialai province and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for attempting to overthrow the Vietnamese government and other trumped up charges. He is currently imprisoned at the prison facility of Trai Ba-Sao in Nam Ha, province of Ha Nam. In prison, the authorities repeatedly tortured him by beating, kicking and hanging him upside-

down until he became unconscious. He can no longer feel or move one of his legs and is in a fragile mental and physical state. According to his relatives his body is like a skeleton due to lack of proper nutrition, medical care and from torture.

THE FOLLOWING HOUSE CHURCH CHRISTIANS WERE BRUTALLY TORTURED

BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS & IMPRISONED: UNABLE TO EAT



On **5 April 2007** a Degar Christian named **Siu Eng** (age 38) from Plei Hluh village, commune Ia Grang, district Ia Grai, province Gia Lai was arrested at his home (approximately 6:30 am) by Vietnamese security police named **Vu** and **Chung**. The reason for his arrest was he refused to join the official government recognized church. The security police took him to the police station at Ia Grai district and beat him mercilessly using karate techniques, punching and kicking him over his body until he became unconscious. Siu Eng's relatives visited him on 7 April 2007 and they saw his swollen face and battered body covered with blood. They burst into tears and used a handkerchief to wipe the dried blood from his face. He told them he was beaten repeatedly and had bled from his nose and ears. His family brought him food but he was unable to open his mouth from pain and was only able to drink liquid soy bean milk. The condition of Siu Eng is unknown at this time.

BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS & IMPRISONED: BLEEDING FROM EARS AND NOSE



On **5 April 2007** a Degar Christian named **Rahlan Piom** (age 31) from the village of Plei Com, commune Ia Grang, district Ia Grai, province Gia Lai was also arrested (as Siu Eng above) at approximately 6:30 am but by different security police (names unknown). The reason for the arrest was that he was a layman for his house church at his village who refused to join the official government recognized church. The security police took him to the police station at Ia Grai district and tortured him in the same way they did to Siu Eng. The security police mercilessly beat him using karate techniques, boxing, and kicking him until he became unconscious. He was bruised and battered and covered in blood from the beatings. On 7 April 2007 his family visited him and cried out loud when they saw his battered face. They brought him food but he was barely able to open his mouth still suffering from the beatings. The condition of **Rahlan Piom** is unknown at this time.

BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS: ATTEMPTS TO BREAK HIS EARDRUMS



On **11 March 2007** a Degar Christian named **Rahlan Pyap** (age 32) from Plei Hluh village, commune Ia Grang, district Ia Grai, province Gia Lai received an order from Vietnamese security police of Ia Grang commune to attend their office. When **Rahlan Pyap** arrived at the police station around 10 am that day the police pushed him into a car and drove him to the police station in Ia Grai district. Here, the security police told Rahlan Pyap that he must follow the government recognized religion of Siu Kim and Rcom Boi or face severe punishment. He refused and the police began striking him with their fists and slapping his ears trying to break his eardrums. They also beat his face, abdominal region and kicked him all over his body until he became unconscious. The police repeatedly tortured him in this manner numerous times until he was released on 23 March 2007.

BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS & IMPRISONED



On **11 March 2007** a Degar Christian named **Rcom Mrin** (age 47) from Plei Khop village, Commune Ia Grang, District Ia Grai, Gia Lai province was ordered by the security police of Ia Grang commune to attend their office. When **Rcom Mrin** arrived at the police station around 10 am that day the police pushed him into a car and drove him to the police station in Ia Grai district. Here, the police told him that he must follow the religion of Siu Kim or Rcom Boi or he will be severely punished. **Rcom Mrin** refused and the police began beating him with their fists and also slapping his ears trying to break his eardrums. He was beaten on his face, his abdominal parts and kicked all over until he was unconscious. The condition of **Rcom Mrin** is unknown at this time.

BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS & IMPRISONED



On **11 March 2007** a Degar Christian named **Rmah Hlip** (age 37) from Plei Hlueh village, commune Ia Grang, district Ia Grai, province Gia Lai was summoned by police to attend their office at Ia Grang commune. When he arrived at the police station around 10 am, the police pushed him into a car then took him to Ia Grai district police station. Here, the police told him that he must follow the government recognized religion of Siu Kim and Rcom Boi or he will be severely punished. **Rmah Hlip** refused and the police began beating him with their fists and slapping his ears trying to break his eardrums. He was beaten on his face, body and kicked all over until he was unconscious. His condition is unknown at the present time.

HOUSE CHURCH WOMAN – MOTHER & 6 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER IMPRISONED



On **11 March 2007** a Degar Christian woman named **Rahlan H'Per** (age 28) from Plei Com village, commune Ia Grang, district Ia Grai, Gia Lai province was summoned by the communal police to meet with a provincial police officer at the communal police station. At around 10:00 am, **Rahlan H'Per** arrived at the communal police station and was grabbed by a Vietnamese police officer named **Minh** who took her to the police station in Ia Grai district. The police questioned her as to whom she was communicating with in America and she replied that she only kept in contact with her husband. The Security Police warned her that if she doesn't follow the official Church she will be placed in jail. She remained silent and was right away taken to prison in Ia Grai district. The next morning her mother and 6 year old daughter came to the prison to see her. The security police took her 6 year old daughter and also put her in the prison cell with her and kept them both there for 6 days until they were released on 16 March 2007.

HUNG UPSIDE DOWN & ELECTRIC SHOCKED: BEATEN TO CAUSE INTERNAL ORGAN DAMAGE.



The Degar Christian named **Lat** (left) was born in 1964, from Ploi Na-Prong village, commune Cu-A, district Thanh Pho Ploi Ku, Gialai province. Vietnamese security police arrested him on July 15, 2002 at around 12 noon for possessing a cell-phone and accused him of speaking to the Montagnard Foundation. They took him to the police station (Don # 3) where they tied him up and hung him upside down. Here they tortured him by beatings with batons and fists, kicking him and shocking him with electricity until blood came out of his mouth, eyes, and ears and he became unconscious. After the torture he was sent to T-20 prison. On November 20, 2003 he was tried at the local court in Gialai province and sentenced to seven years imprisonment. The trumped up charges were: *that he wanted to overthrow the government of Hanoi and that he wanted to be the province chief of Gialai province*. Lat is now imprisoned at Trai Ba Sao prison, in Ha Nam province. According to Lat's family, who reported to us after visiting him on January 9, 2007, he is suffering from internally damaged organs because of the torture at the hands of the security police. He reported that authorities repeatedly beat him in attempts to damage his internal organs. Lat's wife, as well as others Degar prisoners' wives, have become sick and suffer from severe stress worrying about their imprisoned family members. They believe their husbands will soon die because of the injuries they have sustained and that no medical care has been provided to them.

NOT A DAY GOES BY WITHOUT PAIN: INTERNAL ORGAN DAMAGE FROM TORTURE



Ksor Rik was born in 1970, from Bong Ngol village, commune An-Phu, district Thanh Pho Ploi Ku in Gialai province. He participated in the peaceful demonstrations of 2001 and the security police arrested him on September 8, 2004. When they arrested him, they tortured him severely by beating, kicking, shocking, and punching him in a calculated way by deliberately targeting his internal organs and fatal spots in order for him to suffer and die a slow death. Ksor Rik was imprisoned at the prison facility Trai Ba Sao. The Vietnamese security forces repeatedly beat him where he suffered internal damage to his heart, lung, pancreas, and liver. Not a day goes by that he is not in pain. Like every other Degar prisoner wife, Ksor Rik's wife became sick and cannot eat, drink and sleep properly

because of the stress she has thinking of her husband. She believes her husband will soon die from his injuries and from lack of medical care.

CRIPPLED FROM TORTURE



Ksor Wot was born in 1970, from Ploi Bong Phun village, Cu-A commune, Thanh Pho Ploi Ku district, Gialai province. He was imprisoned on June 14, 2005 for participating in the peaceful religious demonstrations in February 2001. Prior to his arrest, Ksor Wot went into hiding but was captured in the village of Ploi Bong Ngol at An-Phu commune. Villagers witnessed the arrest and reported the Vietnamese security forces severely beat and tortured him. Ksor Wot's family reported that he desperately needs medical attention for internal organ damage and his injuries left him crippled. To our knowledge Ksor Wot remains imprisoned at Trai Ba-Sao prison in Nam Ha, province of Ha-nam.

CONSTANT PAIN FROM INTERNAL INJURIES DUE TO TORTURE (NO PHOTO AVAILABLE)

Ksor Poi was born in 1962, from Ploi Kueng Grai village, commune Ha Bau, district Dak Doa, Gia-Lai province. On February 2, 2001, Ksor Poi joined other Christians in the peaceful protest asking for release of two Christian brothers held by Vietnamese police. On February 6, 2001 at around 2 am, he was arrested and tortured. Ksor Poi stood trial on September 26, 2001 where he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. To our knowledge he remains imprisoned at Trai Ba-Sao prison where he was tortured by severe beatings. His relatives report he suffers from severe internal complications and daily pain and fear he may soon die.

ELECTRIC SHOCK TORTURED: FACE DISFIGURED FROM TORTURE



Ksor Hlun was born in 1968 from Ploi Ring village, commune Ha Bau, district Dak Doa, GiaLai province. On April 7, 2004, he was arrested by security forces who tortured him using electric shock. He was beaten and dragged around in public before being sent to T-20 prison in Pleiku. On January 24, 2005, Ksor Hlun was sentenced in the communal court of Ha Bau Dak Doa district, Gialai province to 11 years imprisonment for participating in peaceful demonstrations, separatism, destroying national unity and wanting Vietnamese to leave the Central Highlands. He was imprisoned at Trai Ba-Sao prison in Ha Nam province where authorities repeatedly tortured him. His relatives report he suffers from internally damaged organs and his face has been horribly disfigured from beatings.

CRIPPLED FROM TORTURE & ABUSE



Ksor Cun was born in 1970 from the village of Ploi Ring, commune of Ha Bau, district of Dak Doa, Gialai province. On August 20, 2004 security police arrested, tortured and took him to the prison site T-20 PleiKu. Here Ksor Cun was tortured on two occasions where he became unconscious. On April 24, 2005 he appeared in Court at Plei Ku, Gia Lai province and was sentenced to eight years imprisonment for participation in the 2001 peaceful demonstrations. He is now imprisoned at Trai Ba-Sao prison in Ha Nam province According to his family, he and many other Degar prisoners at Trai Ba Sao prison are crippled and/or suffering from damage done to their internal organs from torture.

CHRISTIAN ARRESTED: HANGED UPSIDE DOWN & TORTURED

On April 25, 2007 the Vietnamese police imprisoned our Christian Brother **Y-Drin Nie** at Buonmathuot prison because they suspected him of collecting the names of the poorest Degar families. The security police tortured him by hanging him upside down and using martial arts beat him unconscious. The security forces then poured water over him until he awoke and they repeated the torture again and again. His condition is currently unknown.

CHRISTIAN WOMAN ARRESTED FOR COLLECTING NAMES OF THE POOR



On April 2, 2007 at approximately 8 am, our Christian sister named **Siu H'Thik** was summoned by the police from Cu A commune in Gialai province to attend their office for interrogation. When she arrived at the police station, she was hand cuffed her and took her to prison accusing her of collecting the names of the poorest Degar people in the area. Siu H'Thik was born in 1969 and she was living at the village of Plei Cuet, commune of Cu A, Pleiku city in Gialai province. Her relatives were extremely distressed for her welfare because it is common knowledge that Vietnamese police torture Degar prisoners. This woman

was not involved in any political activity but only wanted to help the poorest of the Degar families. Her current situation is unknown.

TRANSMIGRATION & 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 – Vietnam, 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.

Since 1975 the Vietnamese government has undertaken the forced confiscation of Degar ancestral land - the stealing of 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 implementing large-scale internal migration policies, which brought thousands of ethnic Vietnamese from the coast and Northern 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 has acknowledged such policies. This displacement program is sometimes called “Fixed Field, Fixed Residence” (which also makes the Degar Montagnard’s traditional agricultural practices illegal) and has effectively condemned the Degar people to a life of poverty. In many cases the reasons for land confiscation and forced relocations are implemented to make way for large scale state controlled coffee plantations.

The Vietnamese government through discrimination and corruption has overall been unable to provide any reasonable alternatives for the welfare of its indigenous minorities or acceptable compensation for land confiscation. 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. The situation is one of general despair and the decades of such practices indicates that a sophisticated plan of ethnic cleansing is taking place. Some examples of such forced relocations and land confiscation are as follows:

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 then and 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 & 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.

DEFORESTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

- *“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 have 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 has 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 a 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 HOUSE CHURCH MEMBERS BEATEN AND IMPRISONED: 11 APRIL 2008

On **Wednesday April 9, 2008** at around 6:30 pm, four Vietnamese security police came to the house of our Christian sister, **Puih H'Bat** while she was leading 20 Christian believers in prayer at her home. This incident occurred in the village of Ploi Bang, Ia Chia commune, Ia Grai district, Gialai province. The security police demanded that all of the Degar believers sign a document agreeing to join the *Hoi Thanh Tin Lanh Vietnam* (The Evangelical Church of Vietnam), which is the government sanctioned church and that those refusing to sign this document would be arrested, tortured and imprisoned. All Christian believers at the home of Puih H'Bat that night however, refused to sign the document.

The next day, on **April 10, 2008**, at around 8:00pm in the evening, many more security police supported with Vietnamese soldiers came to the village of Ploi Bang and summoned all the villagers to report to Ploi Bang Elementary school. The soldiers accused the people of following Ksor Kok and worshiping him. The villagers and believers laughed at this and told the security police that *"we do not follow the religion of Ksor Kok or worship him. He is not god. We only follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and worship our Almighty God the Father."* The security police continued to threaten and intimidate the villagers, attempting to coerce them into signing the document of joining the official government sanctioned church. When everyone refused, they dismissed the meeting at around 10:00PM.

On the day after that, on **April 11, 2008**, at around 4:00AM in the morning, 8 Vietnamese security police stormed into the house of our Christian sister, **Puih H'Bat**, and arrested her. They put her in a truck and took her to the prison facility in the district of Ia Grai. On that same night, the security police also arrested two other Christian brothers, **Ksor Sim** and **Rahlan Don**. At the arrest of Ksor Sim, police sprayed some kind of chemical inside his house in order to force the whole family out in the open. Once outside, the security police shocked Ksor Sim with electric batons until he collapsed to the ground. His wife and 16 year-old daughter ran over to see if he was alive or dead, and the security police then beat and shocked them with their electrical batons until they also collapsed.

Puih H'Bat, today remains isolated in prison, her relatives are prevented from visiting her because she has refused to sign the documents stating she must join the government sanctioned church.

FORCED TO RENOUNCE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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 step foot on those lands again, they would be immediately killed.

DEGAR CATHOLICS BEATEN: CHILDREN WHIPPED & MAN BEATEN UNCONSCIOUS

On January 19, 2008, around 50 Degar Catholic Christians from the village of Ploi Hamong Ktu, commune of Hamong in the district of Dak Ha were praying to the Virgin Mary according to their Catholic beliefs. Security police intervened and shouted for them to leave. Four of them, one adult and three teenagers were detained and beaten by security forces whilst they were praying. Their names and details of their ordeal is as follows:

1. **A Tuik** is a 12 year old boy. The security police whipped him 3 times with a bamboo stick on his back, kicked him on his stomach twice and then slapped his face until he fell down to the ground while he was still kneeling down praying.
2. **A Khoe** is a 13 year old boy. The security police whipped him 2 times with a bamboo stick on his back, kicked him on his stomach once and slapped him once on his face while he was still kneeling down praying.
3. **A Beng** is a 12 year old boy, the security police whipped him 3 times with a bamboo stick on his back, kicked him on his stomach once, kicked him on his back once and then slapped him once on his face while he was still kneeling down praying.
4. **A Then** is a 43 year old man. The security police repeatedly kicked him and passed him from one security officer to another like they were playing soccer kicking him over and over. The security police electric shocked him twice until he lost consciousness. He was left bleeding on the ground and when the security police left, his family and relatives carried him back to his village. He remained unconscious for over one hour and his family thought that he would die. Fortunately he regained consciousness but currently he is unable to walk and still suffers from the beating.

RELIGIOUS EXTORTION

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.

KILLING & CHURCH

BURNING: 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.



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 2000 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 ongoing 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 Hbon 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 the 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 and men today who report sterilizations and various related abuses by Vietnamese authorities 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*.

PERSECUTION OF REFUGEES IN CAMBODIA

- 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."*

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 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. 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).*

The latest reports of deportations occurred on 1 August 2008 with 32 Degars being denied refugee status and sent back to Vietnam, (see KI-Media, *"Thirty Two Montagnards Quietly Deported"* 2 August 2008 By Chiep Mony, VOA Kymer).

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. To further compound the issue, many returned refugees or their families are persecuted once they are returned to Vietnam.



Persecution against Refugee's Families

The Degar family pictured had their home burned to the ground by security forces on 15 October 2007 as punishment for their husband and father having escaped as a refugee to the United States. The mother had been interrogated for 8 hours that day and would suffer burns to her arm.

CONCLUSION: ETHNIC CLEANSING

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 Vietnamese government further appears incapable of addressing the issues facing the Degar people who are in fact their own citizens. Vietnamese authorities have reacted with violence to legitimate concerns by the Degar people and sought to portray those that complain about brutal human rights abuses as separatists and terrorists.

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. While recognizing that the international community is engaged in constructive engagement with Vietnam and that Vietnam has come under some international condemnation about its human rights record, the Montagnard Foundation however has serious and well founded doubts about the level of progress and actual good faith by Vietnam in complying with its obligations towards human rights. The Degar population continually expresses widespread dissatisfaction with the Vietnamese government. Unfortunately the Degar population are basically being forced to watch their race, their people, their culture and their future being repressed and eliminated. The Degar people throughout the central highlands inside Vietnam continually report that the situation is not improving. For the Degar people the preceding decades of persecution is nothing less than – *ethnic cleansing* and the future is just as bleak. The Montagnard Foundation on behalf of its people inside Vietnam seeks a peaceful solution and would welcome Vietnam to sit down and address the issue humanely rather than react with allegations of separatism and repressive tactics by the security forces.

In conclusion the Montagnard Foundation reminds the international community of the “Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, 75th Session, 5 August 2002 on Vietnam which stated:

19. While noting that the State party denies any violation of the Covenant rights in this respect, the Committee remains concerned at the abundance of information regarding the treatment of the Degar (Montagnard) indicating serious violations of articles 7 and 27 of the Covenant.

The Committee is concerned at the lack of specific information concerning indigenous peoples, especially the Degar (Montagnard), and about measures taken to ensure that their rights under article 27 to enjoy their cultural traditions, including their religion and language, as well as to carry out their agricultural activities, are respected.

The State party should take immediate measures to ensure that the rights of members of indigenous communities are respected. Non-governmental organizations and other human rights monitors should be granted access to the central highlands.

The above quote is now six years old and unfortunately little has changed in the Central Highlands today. We can only express our hopes that in another 6 years the situation has changed for the better and thus we ask that the European Union take an active role in seriously promoting human rights for the Degar people who suffer in Vietnam.