

Loc Hung Vegetables Garden Incident

In the first week of 2019, the government of Tan Binh District, HCM City mobilized hundreds of public security officers and demolition workers to destroy an entire Catholic community that had existed since 1954 and that in recent years served as sanctuary for at-risk human rights defenders and victims of government persecution. This community, popularly known as “Vuon Rau Loc Hung” (Loc Hung Vegetables Garden) – the community is part of the Loc Hung Parish and most families in this community earned their living by growing vegetables that they sold at the local markets.

January 4, 2019: hundreds of police officers escorted a large contingent of demolition workers using bulldozers to demolish two homes.

January 8, 2019: they returned to finish off the demolition of the remaining homes (totalling 468 homes belonged to 159 families). The entire community was destroyed. The demolition workers also uprooted many plants and trees that were the source of livelihood of community members.

The police detained about ten persons who attempted to protect their homes.



Loc Hung Vegetables Garden before demolition (photo from FB)



Loc Hung Vegetables Garden after demolition (photo of Nguyen Tri Dung)



Billboard of Loc Hung rezoning

January 9, 2019: Reacting to public outcry, the government issued an official statement affirming that its policy was not to expropriate land, only to remove structures illegally built. However, the following day the government cleared the land and posted a billboard indicating that all 4.8 acres of land had been rezoned for a new school complex. Allegedly the government had bypassed the required process of consultation and compensation negotiation with the residents as required by law and ignored that most of this land is property of the Catholic Archdiocese of HCM City

January 16, 2019: Police Department of HCMC declared that they were consolidating evidence to criminally prosecute some 20 Loc Hung Vegetables Garden dwellers for obstructing officials on duty. Apparently, this move was designed to target influential community members believed by government authorities to be leaders in the fight against land grab.

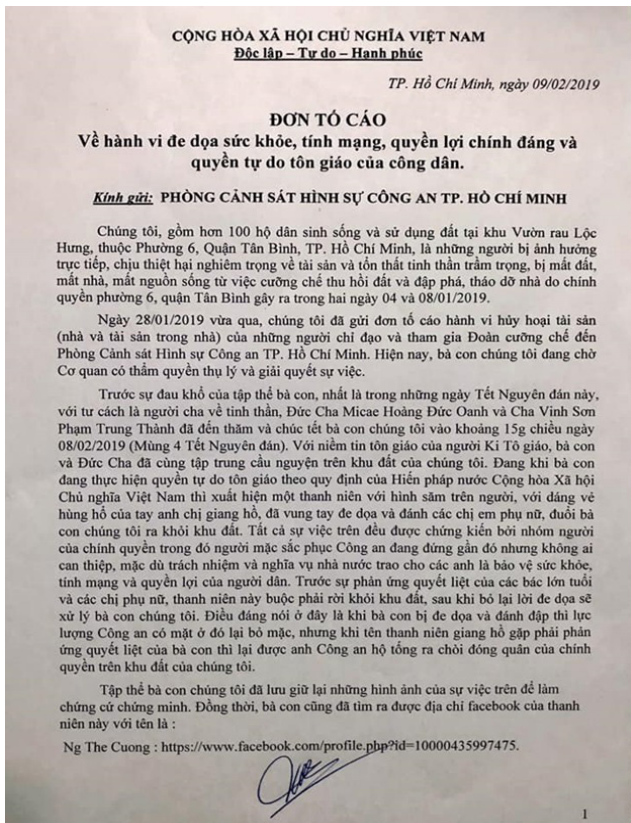
Cutural note: according to the Vietnamese tradition, evicting people from their residence as they prepared to welcome the Lunar New Year is considered utterly immoral and cruel.

February 9, 2019: Over a hundred victims signed a letter of complaint to the Criminal Investigation Division, Department of Public Security of HCM city requesting an investigation into their forced eviction as well as the intimidation campaign in the following days of the site demolition by some unidentified individuals.

February 12, 2019: In an open-letter, a core of lawyers wrote to the HCM lawyers association announcing their intent to come to the legal defense of Loc Hung victims *denoted hereafter as Loc Hung lawyers. The letter confirmed their finding that the Loc Hung eviction was illegal.

February 15, 2019: Loc Hung eviction victims and their lawyers submitted a petition requesting to be received by local authorities and their grievances addressed. Not only the local government officials of HCM city ignored their petition, they also published incorrect information that the majority of Loc Hung residents had accepted government compensation/assistance.

February 18, 2019: Determined to seek justice, Some residents and Loc Hung lawyers went to Hanoi to meet with the central citizen reception committee. Upon their return, Loc Hung lawyers issued a press release - including a communication from the committee requesting the local authorities of HCM city to receive the victims and address their complaints and grievances. It called on the HCM authorities to act according to the law to address citizens' complaints and the HCM Department of Public Security to start their investigation of unlawful acts that caused material and emotional damages to hundreds of Loc Hung victims. It also called on the media -inside and outside Viet Nam - social media networks to objectively broadcast and share accurate information about the Loc Hung Vegetables Garden incident. It thanked all their supporters for material and spiritual supports.



First page of the letter of complaint (in Vietnamese)



Loc Hung residents & lawyers at the citizens' reception office

Email: LocHungParish@gmail.com
Address: 122/7 Trần Đình Xu, Nguyen Cu Trinh Ward, District 1, HCM City, VIETNAM