



PRESS RELEASE

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Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Orders to Defrock Khmer-Krom Buddhist Monk

Pennsauken, 29 July 2012 - The Buddhist monk officer of the Vietnam Buddhist Shanga (VBS - Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam) issued an official pronouncement on July 28, 2012, to defrock a Khmer-Krom Buddhist monk, Venerable Thach Thuol, who is currently ordaining at Tra Set Temple, Tra Set commune, Vinh Hai village, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province within three days. The pronouncement does not detail what Venerable Thach Thuol has violated. It just accuses Venerable Thach Thuol violated the rules of the VBS.

In the past, Vietnam authority used to accuse Venerable Thach Thuol contacting the Khmer-Krom abroad reporting Human Rights violations that the Vietnam authority committed against the Khmer-Krom. The Vietnam authority tactically uses all kind of accusation to defrock the Buddhist monks at Tra Set temple because the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks at this temple refuse to join the Patriotic United Buddhist Association which is a Buddhist organization under the umbrella of the VBS. In 2007, Vietnam authority arrested and defrocked Venerable Kim Moul because he led a peaceful demonstration to demand for religious freedom. In 2011, Vietnam authority defrocked Venerable Ly Sol with a ridiculous alleged crime of raping a woman who is older than his mother.

Vietnam always claims that the Khmer-Krom has freedom to practice their religion. In reality, the Khmer-Krom people are now practicing their Theravada Buddhism in FEAR. Vietnam authority has successfully forced most of the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks to join the VBS. There are some Khmer-Krom temples that are refused to join the VBS facing the oppression as the Tra Set temple. There are some Vietnamese temples that do not join VBS. The Vietnamese Buddhist monks in those temples are just facing the house arrest, but they are not facing defrocked as the Khmer-Krom Buddhist monks.

In this regards, we would like to urge the foreign embassies in Vietnam and civil societies around the world to urgently to:

- Urge Vietnam to stop defrocking Venerable Thach Thuol without any condition.
- Remind Vietnam that religious freedom is a right, not a privilege granted by government.