



**Reply of Viet Nam to the Joint Communication concerning  
17 individuals (Viet Nam)**

*Ref. AL VNM 5/2025 (dated 21 July 2025)*

1. Viet Nam completely rejects the allegations contained in the communication claiming that Viet Nam has committed human rights violations, infringed upon ethnic rights, religious freedom, engaged in torture, arbitrary arrest, etc., against 17 individuals of Khmer ethnicity. Emphasizes that such allegations are based on incomplete, inaccurate, and biased information regarding Viet Nam's policies to protect and promote human rights in general, and to ensure the rights of ethnic minorities and religious communities in particular.

2. The consistent position of the State of Viet Nam is that all ethnic groups and religions are equal, respected, united, and work together to contribute to the country's economic, cultural, and social development, ensuring full and balanced enjoyment of both individual and collective rights. Any acts of discrimination, racial or religious hatred, or incitement of animosity among ethnic or religious groups are strictly prohibited in Viet Nam. This principle is enshrined in the Constitution and concretized in various legal documents such as the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Law on Belief and Religion, among others.

3. Viet Nam does not use the term "*indigenous peoples*", as it is inconsistent with the historical formation and development of the ethnic communities in Viet Nam. Instead, Viet Nam uses the terms "*ethnic minority*" and "*ethnic minority with very small population*" to refer to ethnic groups with smaller populations compared to the majority Kinh people (who account for more than 86% of the population). These terms carry no racial distinction or discriminatory meaning.

Currently, 54 ethnic groups live intermingled throughout Viet Nam's territory, with no separate or exclusive land areas belonging to any single ethnic group. Over thousands of years of history, these ethnic groups have lived side by side, influencing each other's cultures and languages, thereby creating the rich cultural diversity that characterizes different regions across Viet Nam.

4. Every Vietnamese citizen belongs to one of the 54 recognized ethnic groups and has the freedom to determine his or her own ethnic identity. All Vietnamese citizens enjoy full human rights guaranteed by law, without any discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

Viet Nam's laws strictly prohibit any act of exploiting ethnic issues to incite separatism, autonomy, or to divide the great national unity of the 54 ethnic groups of Viet Nam, as well as any act that threatens the national unity and territorial integrity of the country. Any organizations or individuals violating these prohibitions shall bear legal responsibility.

This position is entirely consistent with Article 46 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states:

“Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.”

**5.** The consistent policy of the State of Viet Nam is to ensure equality, unity, mutual respect, and mutual assistance for common progress among all ethnic groups. Ethnic groups, whether majority or minority, more or less developed, are equal in rights and obligations in all aspects of social life; this equality is guaranteed by the Constitution and the law. The objective of the State of Viet Nam is to strengthen the great national unity based on the principles enshrined in the 2013 Constitution.

Ethnic minorities have the right to use their own language and script, preserve their cultural identity, and promote their fine customs, traditions, and cultural values; they are entitled to social welfare, economic and educational support, vocational training, and the enjoyment of civil and political rights equal to those of all other citizens.

Viet Nam's ethnic policies aim to narrow and eventually eliminate the development gap between ethnic groups and regions by ensuring equality and implementing preferential measures and policies for disadvantaged groups and areas. This enables all communities to develop and to equally enjoy human rights. The results and achievements in guaranteeing the rights of ethnic minorities have been detailed in Viet Nam's fifth periodic national report on the implementation of the CERD Convention.

**6.** Not only Vietnamese citizens but all persons, including foreigners residing in Viet Nam, have their human rights guaranteed under Vietnamese law. As Viet Nam's legal system is structured by sector, the protection of ethnic minority rights is incorporated into numerous legal documents covering different areas of social life.

Among the 53 laws containing provisions safeguarding the rights of ethnic minorities, 12 laws have been enacted since 2012. Viet Nam is currently studying and drafting a Law on Ethnic Minorities. The Government of Viet Nam has also established a Ministry of Ethnic and Religious Affairs with the aim of prioritizing and promoting ethnic and religious affairs, and further enhancing the contributions of ethnic and religious communities to national development.

7. The Government of Viet Nam always gives priority to investment and socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. National programs and targets identify ethnic minorities as the main beneficiaries. These programs and policies focus on multiple areas such as ensuring social welfare, sustainable poverty reduction, population planning and settlement, development of comprehensive and interregional socio-economic infrastructure, education, training, health care, and culture; enhancing both the quantity and quality of ethnic minority cadres; promoting gender equality; and addressing urgent issues related to women and children.

Viet Nam adopted Resolution No. 120/2020/QH14 dated 19 June 2020, approving the Master Plan for Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for 2021–2030, which aims to achieve sustainable development, leverage regional advantages and potential, and strengthen the self-reliance of ethnic minorities.

On 14 October 2021, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 1719/QĐ-TTg approving the National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for 2021–2030 (as referenced in Viet Nam’s fifth CERD report).

8. Viet Nam has implemented activities and tasks to collect, study, preserve, and promote outstanding cultural heritage values associated with ethnic minorities; it has also developed and carried out important projects supporting ethnic minorities in preserving and promoting their traditional cultural values.

Several of Viet Nam’s intangible cultural heritages have been inscribed by UNESCO as Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, including:

- The Then practice of the Tày, Nùng, and Thái peoples of Viet Nam,
- The Xòe dance of the Thái people, and
- The art of pottery-making of the Cham people.

9. With the policy of building a unified yet diverse national culture within the community of Vietnamese ethnic groups, the Government approved the Project on Preservation and Development of Cultures of Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities until 2020 (Prime Minister’s Decision No. 1270/QĐ-TTg dated 27 January 2011), the Project on Preservation and Promotion of Ethnic Minority Languages and Scripts in Cultural Activities, and the Project on Preservation and Promotion of Literary and Artistic Works of Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities.

Ethnic minorities in all regions participate in cultural activities reflecting their own identities. Many radio and television programs and cultural publications are produced in minority languages such as Mong, Ê Đê, Cham, Khmer, and others. Numerous traditional festivals have been restored, maintained, and newly created, contributing to the preservation and promotion of national cultural identity.

10. Viet Nam has incorporated ethnic minority languages into the national general education curriculum, including Ba Na, Cham, Khmer, Ê Đê, Gia Rai, and Mong, and has piloted instruction in other languages such as Hoa, Thái, Cơ Tu, and Tà Ôi. Currently, 16 provinces and cities provide ethnic language instruction in general education schools.

Broadcasting programs in ethnic languages have increased both in number and airtime. Ethnic minorities can follow programs in multiple languages suited to regional cultures. The VTV5 Channel of Viet Nam Television alone produces and broadcasts content in 22 ethnic minority languages.

11. To date, 62,283 intangible cultural heritages from 34 provinces and cities have been inventoried, and 288 items have been inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, including 145 items belonging to ethnic minorities—accounting for over 50 percent of the total. These include:

- 05 heritages in the category of *languages and scripts*;
- 07 in *folk knowledge*;
- 04 in *folk literature*;
- 69 in *folk performing arts*;
- 66 in *social practices and beliefs*; and
- 30 in *traditional crafts*.

Between 2016 and 2018, six ethnic groups—Dao, Mường, Mong, Thái, Cham, and Khmer—held their own national cultural festivals.

**12.** At present, about 95 percent of Viet Nam’s population engages in some form of belief or religious practice. As of April 2024, the State of Viet Nam has recognized 39 religious organizations and granted registration certificates to one organization and one religious sect representing 16 religions, with approximately 27 million followers (about 27.5 percent of the population). There are 54,125 clerics, 135,561 dignitaries, over 29,658 places of worship, 50,703 belief establishments, and around 5,000 religious meeting points, including more than 60 collective worship points for foreigners residing legally in Viet Nam. Around 15 religious newspapers and journals are currently in operation.

In Viet Nam, all religions coexist harmoniously, in solidarity with the nation, and there is no ethnic or religious conflict; all religions are equal before the law. The Khmer ethnic community, primarily followers of Theravāda Buddhism, is concentrated mainly in the southwestern region.

Religious organizations are permitted to establish schools and training classes for religious practitioners to meet organizational needs. At present, Viet Nam has over 60 training institutions for religious personnel. The Vietnam Buddhist Sangha has established the Theravāda Khmer Buddhist Academy in Can Tho City, which provides specialized training for Theravāda Khmer monks. To date, the Academy has conducted several courses, graduating more than 100 monks with bachelor’s degrees in Buddhist studies.

**13.** No individual or organization in Viet Nam has ever been threatened, attacked, or subjected to retaliation for participating in activities that fall within the scope of rights guaranteed by law—particularly for having contact or cooperation with United Nations agencies or international human rights organizations. Such cooperative activities are only required to comply with Vietnamese law, respect the legitimate rights and interests of other organizations and individuals, and remain consistent with Viet Nam’s national interests and security.

The Government of Viet Nam has promulgated numerous legal instruments providing a framework that facilitates the operations of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies in Viet Nam, such as Decree No. 58/2022/NĐ-CP and Decree No. 80/2020/NĐ-CP. At present, there are 15 United Nations organizations and more than 400 foreign NGOs registered and operating normally in cooperation with Vietnamese organizations and citizens to promote and protect human rights.

In addition, Viet Nam actively participates in regional and global human rights mechanisms and forums, and strengthens exchanges and cooperation with the United Nations and international partners to promote socio-economic development as well as the promotion and protection of human rights in Viet Nam. The State also encourages and facilitates the participation of associations, mass organizations, professional and social organizations, and international organizations in contributing to the country's overall socio-economic development.

**14.** Every Vietnamese citizen is guaranteed by law to live and act in a safe environment. Any act of harassment or infringement upon citizens' legitimate freedoms is strictly prohibited by law. This principle is codified in the 2013 Constitution of Viet Nam and related legal documents. Accordingly, any act violating the lawful rights and freedoms of others shall be subject to legal liability, depending on the nature and severity of the act—ranging from administrative sanctions to criminal prosecution.

The 2015 Penal Code of Viet Nam, as amended in 2017, devotes Chapter XV (11 articles) to crimes that infringe upon human freedom and citizens' democratic rights. Alongside legal measures, Viet Nam actively conducts public education and awareness campaigns through the mass media to enhance understanding of human and citizens' rights, the need to respect the legitimate rights and interests of others, and the right to lodge complaints and denunciations. The law also strictly prohibits any abuse of power or position to infringe upon citizens' freedoms and democratic rights.

**15.** Viet Nam strictly prohibits all acts of discrimination, division, or sabotage of the national unity policy, as well as any incitement of ethnic hatred. Acts of racial discrimination or support for divisive and discriminatory activities are forbidden and subject to severe punishment under Vietnamese law.

Specifically, Article 116 of the 2015 Penal Code (as amended in 2017)—on the “Crime of undermining national unity policy”—criminalizes acts of inciting ethnic separatism (Clause 1(b)) and acts of sowing division among followers of different religions (Clause 1(c)).

**16.** Viet Nam affirms that the arrest and prosecution of the 17 individuals mentioned in the communication were based on clear evidence and specific acts constituting criminal offences as defined under Vietnamese criminal law. No one is arrested for their ethnicity, religion, or for exercising their democratic freedoms;

only individuals who commit violations of law, or who abuse democratic freedoms to infringe upon the lawful rights and interests of other organizations or individuals, are held legally accountable.

Viet Nam rejects the unfounded allegation of “arbitrary or widespread arrests of Khmer ethnic persons.” On the principles of rule of law, fairness, and objectivity, the arrest and trial of the 17 individuals were necessary, conducted in full compliance with Vietnamese legal procedures, and consistent with the international human rights treaties to which Viet Nam is a party./.