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## BISHOP VINCENT NGUYEN VAN LONG'S MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OF LAND SEIZURE BY VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT

Parramatta, Australia 11.01.2019

To: Victims of the forced land seizure at Loc Hung Parish, Hochiminh City Vietnam  
Concerned citizens, civil society, human rights groups, religious organizations.

My dear people,

Through various news outlets, many of our compatriots and I learned with great sorrow of the destruction of your beloved homes and properties by the authorities in Hochiminh City. This area attached to the Catholic Parish of Loc Hung has been the residences and livelihoods of many families and generations of people who migrated here from the communist North at the partitioning of Vietnam in 1954. They are mostly low-income families, students, former prisoners of conscience and amputee-veterans of the South Vietnamese Army.

The authorities often resort to the use of force in order to seize properties and land in places which have potential commercial value. This has been a pattern of behavior on the part of the communist government in Vietnam ironically since the so-called “doi moi” (reform) era, as demonstrated in many incidents throughout the country. For example in 2008, the authorities attempted to turn the former papal nunciature in Hanoi into a bar and night club, prompting popular protest by Catholic citizens. In 2011, attempts were made also by the government to seize property attached to a Redemptorist Monastery in Thai Ha Parish. In more recent times, similar attempts were made to grab the land owned by the Sisters of the Lovers of the Cross at Thu Thiem.

The latest land grabbing exercise on the part of the communist government has caused extensive damage, destruction and hurt to hundreds of families. Many have been left homeless, their livelihoods totally ruined and their lives irreparably damaged. All this has happened on the eve of the Lunar New Year “Tet” which is considered the most sacred celebration in Vietnam. The reporting of the incident by the state-owned media does not accord with what happened on the ground as testified by the victims. Many of them are left at the mercy of the elements and the support of religious groups such as the Redemptorist Fathers and fellow parishioners.

Dear compatriots,

As a Vietnamese and a bishop Chair of the Commission for Social Justice attached to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, I would like to express my deep solidarity with you and add my support to your struggle for dignity in the midst of the incredible ordeal that has been forced on you. I pray that you remain committed in your faith and your search for justice.

I also urge the authorities to refrain from acts of violence, terror and repression against the people towards whom they have a duty to protect and assist. I call on the Vietnamese government at all levels to respect the human rights of its own citizens, to promote the common good and to ensure justice and dignity for the people affected.

I call on the people of good will, both inside and outside Vietnam to support the victims of the land seizure in their struggle for justice and dignity.

Yours sincerely,



Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFMConv  
Bishop of Parramatta, Australia  
Chair of Bishops Commission for Social Justice - Mission and Service  
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

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Vietnamese Catholic Bishops Conference  
Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development  
Australian Department of Foreign Affairs  
Australian Embassy in Vietnam