

Viet Nam land grabbing case needs to be urgently addressed – UN human rights experts

GENEVA – A group of United Nations independent human rights experts on Wednesday called on the Vietnamese Government to intervene urgently in a case of forced eviction of the last remaining residents of Con Dau, a small village located on the outskirts of Da Nang city in central Viet Nam.

“This appears to be a clear case of land grabbing for the benefit of private entrepreneurs and at the expense of local communities,” the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, Raquel Rolnik, said.

In 2007, the local government of Da Nang city decided to expropriate the land of Con Dau village, used for housing and agriculture. Residents were opposed to the project and were offered inadequate compensation and housing alternatives in a distant location. The land was leased to the private company Sun Land to build an eco-resort.

In 2013, hundreds of residents moved out after facing pressure and threats, with some even seeing their homes demolished. Land use rights are reportedly now being sold by lots to private individuals. On 7 March 2014, the local Da Nang government gave the remaining hundred or so households a deadline of 15 April 2014 to give up their land and move out. Meanwhile however, the compulsory demolition of homes is continuing, and it is feared that even before the deadline elapse, all houses will have been destroyed.

“Since about one hundred families are still struggling to keep their homes, we are making this urgent call to the Central Government of Viet Nam to step in firmly,” Ms. Rolnik added.

UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Farida Shaheed, who recently visited Viet Nam, noted that the village was home to a small Catholic community.

“Con Dau was built by the work of many generations of residents, who shaped their culture through cultivating rice and church activities,” she said. “The parish cemetery, a national culture heritage site, has been demolished and removed to a remote area. Such acts are seriously disrupting the cultural and religious life of the community, and should immediately be ceased.”

UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Heiner Bielefeldt and UN Independent Expert on minority issues Rita Izsák have joined an urgent appeal that was sent to the Viet Nam Government earlier last week.

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