



Thank you for the opportunity to address the rights of Indigenous People in Vietnam.

The Tai people have lived in their homeland, in what is today's Northwest Vietnam for thousands of years, long before the Vietnamese obtained a foothold for the first time in the Tai homeland in 1954 after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. The following year a treaty was signed between the Tai and the Vietnamese government granting the Tai their autonomy and self-determination. However, this was abolished in 1975.

In the current pandemic, Vietnam is successful in keeping COVID cases low through tracing and strict quarantine measures. While we do not know of any past or current cases of COVID within the Tai community, we cannot be sure. Lack of access to healthcare and educational material in the Tai language could make the virus go undetected and would underrepresent the number of actual cases.

Indigenous communities in Vietnam are among the poorest and suffer discrimination based on stereotypes; arbitrary arrest; the confiscation of ancestral lands and displacement, including for development projects and the construction of hydropower dams, in many cases without prior consultation or the provision of adequate compensation.

Often, Tai community members leave their homes to find work in urban areas such as Hanoi. While there they experience wage and work discrimination because they are Tai. They are often paid a quarter of what the going rate is for a normal worker and they must take the jobs or go without employment. Despite these low wages, they send these wages back to their families and are often the only source of income.

During the pandemic, whenever an urban area experiences an outbreak, the government enforces a quarantine which negatively impacts these workers economically. The Tai workers are always the first ones to be let go. Without work they return home where there are no job opportunities and possibility for income.

In an already impoverished area, the pandemic has only exacerbated their situation. The government has not recognized this fact and has not helped in any manner. A wave of economic depression is sweeping through the area.

These are firsthand accounts of what is happening to the Tai community.