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For more information, please contact:

Y Bion Mlo, in Greensboro, NC, at 336-929-5117

Sally Buonya, in Greensboro, NC, at 336-493-5361

Andy Eya, in Charlotte, NC, at 704-957-7546

July 10 Montagnard March in Washington, D.C.

Montagnard Americans Protest Vietnam's Fierce New Crackdown on Indigenous Montagnards in the Central Highlands

On Monday, July 10, the Montagnard Dega community from North Carolina will hold a peaceful demonstration and march in Washington, D.C. to protest Vietnam's stepped-up repression of Montagnards in the Central Highlands.

An estimated 400 Montagnards – many in traditional dress – will gather at 10:30 am at the US Capitol (*see address, below). Following prayer, the Dega Anthem, and speeches by Montagnards and their supporters, at 12:30 pm they will march to Lafayette Square in front of the White House. At 2:30 pm, they will march to the Vietnamese Embassy at 1233 20th Street NW, before disbanding and returning to North Carolina at 4 p.m.

“From 1975 until today, the Montagnard Dega People have faced never-ending persecution, land grabbing, imprisonment, and torture,” said Y Duen Buon Dap, executive director of the Dega Central Highlands Organization in Charlotte, N.C. “In 2001, 2004, and 2008, Dega gathered for peaceful demonstrations in five provinces in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Instead of addressing our grievances, Vietnamese authorities continue to beat and torture us, sentence us to long prison sentences, and ban our independent house churches.”

Hundreds of Montagnards have been unjustly imprisoned for simply exercising their rights to peaceful dissent and independent worship. The result of Vietnam's systematic repression of Montagnards has been a flow of hundreds of refugees to Thailand, where they must wait years before being safely resettled abroad.

“The world should not forget about Montagnard refugees living in limbo in Thailand, or the Montagnards languishing in Vietnamese prisons for peacefully exercising their rights,” said Sally Buonya. “Vietnam should immediately release all Montagnard religious and political prisoners.”

“We are asking the United Nations and democratic countries around the world to put pressure on Vietnam to respect the human rights of indigenous Montagnard people in Vietnam,” said Y Bion Mlo. “The US should not upgrade its bilateral relations with Vietnam until it makes significant progress in respecting our rights to land and property and to freely practice our religion.”

*(The Montagnards will gather at 10:30 am July 10 near the Northwest corner of the Capitol, at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and Third Streets NW).

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