News



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Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — January 11, 2019
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More than 100 homes — including a church-run home for disabled war veterans — were forcibly demolished by state officials in southern Vietnam.

Ucanews.com reported that people living in the dwellings, most of whom are Catholic, said they were given little or no warning about the demolitions in Loc Hu'ng near Ho Chi Minh City.

Among the destroyed buildings was a Redemptorist-owned house that was home to 18 war veterans who lost limbs in the Vietnam War. The veterans have no relatives and sell lottery tickets for a living.

Veterans said police forced them to immediately evacuate and take their belongings with them before demolition of the building began early Jan. 8. The veterans said no notice was given about the demolition; some did not even have time to take their prosthetic limbs and crutches with them.

A veteran said police promised to give them each $86 if they moved to police stations, but the former soldiers refused because they do not trust the police.

He said his fellow veterans went to the Redemptorists' monastery for support, ucanews.com reported.

Authorities from Tan Binh district "completely knocked down 112 illegally built houses" on a plot of land on Jan. 4 and Jan. 8, the state-run Tuoi tre newspaper reported.

The publication quoted district officials who accused local people of illegally trading the land which the government said it has plans to use for building schools and public facilities.

Overseas media reports stated some 300 police took part in the operation, which included the use of bulldozers.

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Redemptorist Fr. Anthony Le Ngoc Thanh, who leads a Vietnamese injured veterans program, called on people to offer temporary shelter to the homeless veterans.

Thanh said the house was built on a 220-square-meter plot, which the Redemptorists bought from a local family who had lived there for long time. He said the cost of the now demolished house was covered by benefactors at home and abroad.

Land owned by the Paris Foreign Mission Society since 1954 was also seized, reported AsiaNews, a Rome-based missionary news agency.

Authorities have said they would offer evicted householders financial support but not compensate for any damages and loss.

The seizing of church land and properties used by local Catholics by the communist government has been an ongoing issue in Vietnam.