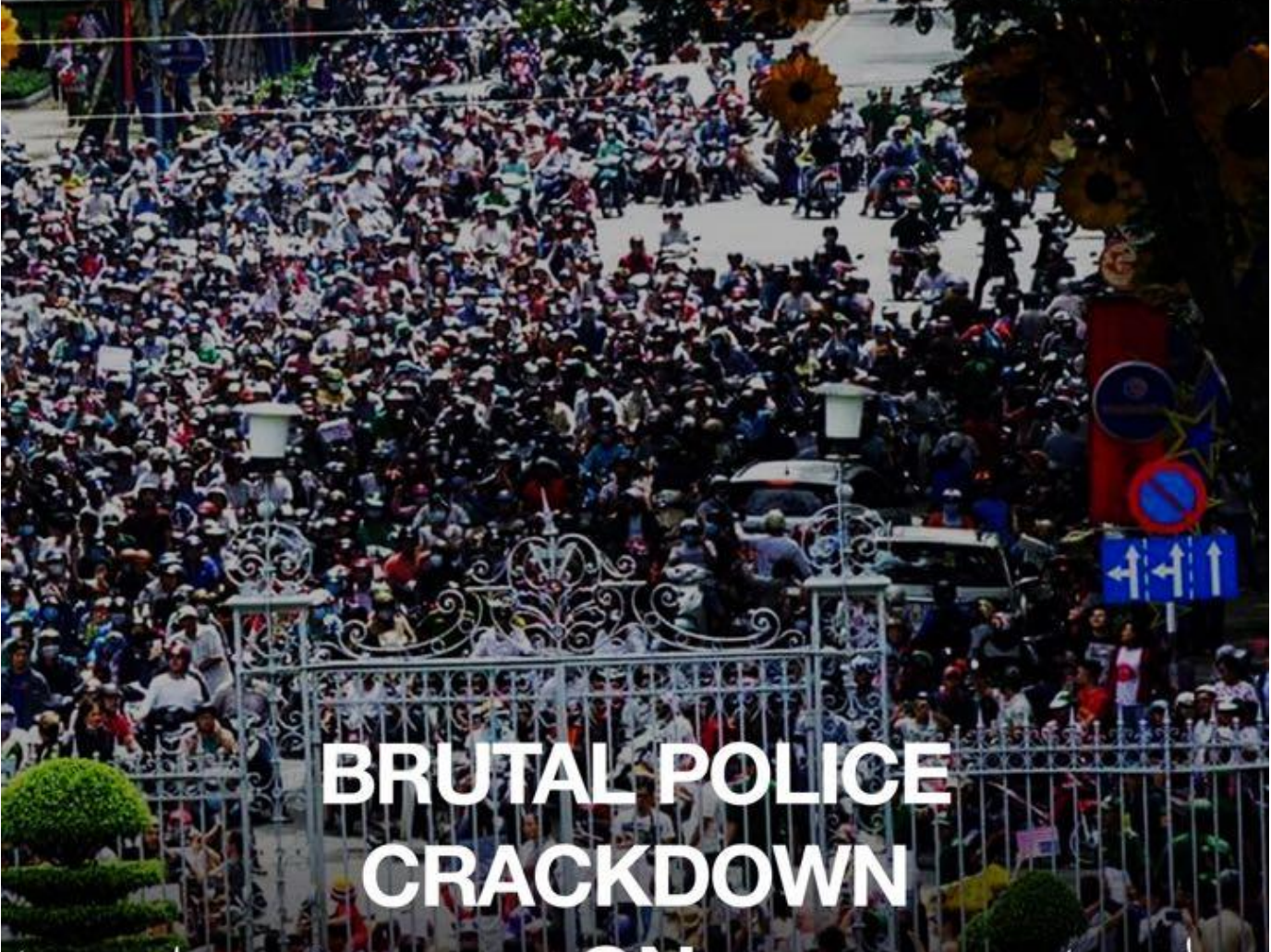


BLACK SUNDAYS



BRUTAL POLICE
CRACKDOWN
ON
CIVILIANS

PROTESTERS'
DIARY



BLACK SUNDAYS

BRUTAL POLICE

CRACKDOWNS ON CIVILIANS

JUNE 28, 2018

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SUMMARY

This report provides information obtained through images, video footage, and witness accounts of the brutal crackdown, including arbitrary detentions and torture of dozens of peaceful, unarmed civilians, in different cities across Vietnam on several days during June 2018.

These arbitrary arrests and torture constitute systematic, widespread and blatant violations of human rights by the Vietnamese government. They also violate international human rights treaties to which Vietnam is a signatory. Most worryingly, the police have not yet shown any signs that they might stop harassment and repression of peaceful protesters; instead, post-rally persecution has reportedly been increasing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mass protests were reported in many cities across Vietnam in June 2018. The protests were against two controversial bills on Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Cyber Security (CS). Despite public outrage, the CS law was passed on June 12 while the SEZ bill is expected to be adopted in the October meeting session of the one-party legislature.

Under the SEZ law, foreign investors may lease land in the Van Don, Phu Quoc, and Bac Van Phong economic zones for a duration of up to 99 years with favorable conditions. Given the context of Sino-Vietnamese relations, there are good reasons to believe that the primary beneficiary of the law will be China, with Chinese firms being the main investors and the three economic zones becoming a modern type of territorial concession. However, political leaders, including Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and National Assembly Chairwoman Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, are determined to have the law passed “for the sake of economic development.”

The CS bill, on the other hand, was adopted on June 12 after the legislature voted overwhelmingly (86%) for it. Many people believe

that this law, which obviously targets online dissidents, is paving the way for the SEZ bill to be passed by silencing critical voices.

Protests broke out sporadically in many parts of Vietnam, commencing with Phan Ri town in the southeastern province of Binh Thuan on June 7. State-owned media described protesters as “extremists who incited public disorder.” On June 9, a protest broke out in the HCMC-based Tan Tao industrial zone.

I. MASSIVE PROTESTS AND CRACKDOWNS ON SUNDAY, JUNE 10

On June 10, thousands of people took to the streets in Hanoi, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Binh Thuan, and Ho Chi Minh City in objection to the two bills. The rallies were quickly suppressed; many protesters were pushed into buses and taken to different police stations where they were subjected to interrogations, fines and, most seriously, torture.

In Hanoi, at least ten activists were arbitrarily detained. Among them were two female activists – Nguyen Thuy Hanh (aged 56) and Cao Vinh Thinh (30) – who, after a motorbiking tour at the end of the day, were kidnapped on the street by a group of plainclothes policemen.



Img. 1 Hanh was released at 1 am the next day with injuries and bruises over her face.

Hanh and Thinh were taken to Trung Tu ward police station, where Hanh was tortured and humiliated by a security officer who kept threatening to beat her to death. Some activists identified him as Khuong, a public security agent of Dong Da District. Hanh was released at 1 am the next day with injuries and bruises over her face.



Img. 2 Khuong (front) is believed to have tortured Hanh during her custody.

None of the violent police attacks against peaceful protesters were reported by the state-owned media. However, mainstream media proved to be very hasty in attacking protesters, labeling them as “peace disrupting extremists.”¹

¹ VNExpress. (2018, June 10). People in many provinces took to the street causing public disorder. Retrieved from <https://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/nguoi-dan-nhieu-dia-phuong-xuong-duong-gay-nao-loan-3761525.html>

On the same day, hundreds were arrested in HCMC when they came to the city center for peaceful rallies. They were charged with “causing public disorder” and were fined.

Reports of police brutality surfaced when video clips and pictures showed a group of protestors being beaten, dragged on the streets, and taken away by the authorities. The videos spread widely on social media with hundreds of likes and shares on Facebook in Vietnam by the late afternoon of that same day.

The HCMC police reported that they “temporarily arrested” 310 people but kept silent about viral video footage that showed protestors being beaten up and brutally arrested.¹

“Typically the protestors were trying to keep the rally peaceful. Six men intentionally grabbed me and pushed me into a bus, where they kept attacking me. I realized that three of them were policemen while the rest were wearing uniforms of the ‘urban order keepers’.”

(Huynh Tan Tuyen, Interview by the Radio Free Asia).



¹ Radio Free Asia Facebook (2018, June 25). The HCMC police kept silent about beating up protestors. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/RFAVietnam/videos/10156589938779571/?hc_ref=ARRT5L1N_PDNHVQzJg1hJz6c77l4HeAsVH1gG1oIqgWtexO7FF3-ULPIw8rqwZVE_Jw

A case caught by the news was that of a Vietnamese American, William Anh Nguyen, 33, a student at Yale University. Video footage showed Nguyen with a bleeding head wound being dragged by plainclothes men through the streets into custody.¹ On June 15, 2018, the police of Ho Chi Minh City announced that they had opened a formal investigation and formally filed charges against William Anh Nguyen for “disturbing public order,” after holding him in arbitrary detention for 16 days and counting. If found guilty, he faces a sentence of up to seven years in prison.

A few days later, Nguyen appeared on national television to “admit guilt” in the usual “TV confession” procedure that the governments of Vietnam and China often use to humiliate political dissidents in public.

“I understand that my acts violated (the law)... I regret that I caused trouble for people heading to the airport. I blocked traffic and caused trouble to my family and friends,” Nguyen said in Vietnamese on HTV in footage provided by city police.

¹ NDTV (2018, June 19). US Student Arrested In Vietnam For Attending Mass Demonstrations, "Regrets" Breaking Law. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/american-student-william-nguyen-arrested-in-vietnam-regrets-breaking-law-1869869>

Nguyen's case made international headlines when members of the U.S. Congress publicly condemned Vietnam for the arbitrary arrest and detention of an American citizen for merely observing the Vietnamese people exercising their right to peaceful assembly.



Img. 3 Plainclothes police (wearing masks) were carrying William Anh Nguyen (lying on the ground) by his limbs.

Peaceful rallies were brutally cracked down by extensive forces of police, security officers, and the so-called “civil order defenders”, a sort of semi-militia.

There have been reports that both plain-clothed and uniformed police officers were punching, kicking, and stomping on protestors, as well as beating them with batons. Protesters were taken to various police stations and detained illegally overnight. While in custody, some of

them continued to be beaten up by police. State-controlled media reported that the police had filed charges against four people for “abusing their right to protest to disrupt public order, causing damages to property.”

People in Phan Ri Cua, a small town in the coastal province of Binh Thuan, were also among those who suffered the most from police brutality. A young fisher was so seriously beaten in police custody that he went into coma on June 20. Several others were jailed and charged with “causing public disorder.” At the same time, all of the local protesters were defamed by mainstream media, who alleged that they were paid 300,000 VND by “hostile forces” to join the demonstrations but did not go into details as to who the hostile forces were.



Img. 4 Activists suspect that LRADs were used against protesters.

It is believed that the authorities used Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs), bought from the U.S., against protesters. LRADs were also said to be used to suppress protest rallies in the coastal provinces affected by the 2016 marine life disaster.

II. SUNDAY JUNE 17 - THE BLOODY SUNDAY

Starting in the early morning of June 17, downtown HCMC was surrounded by hundreds of uniformed and plainclothes police. In a pre-emptive strike against the protestors, the HCMC authorities set up barbed wires around various locations, such as near the Notre Dame Cathedral, Nguyen Hue walking district, and near Hoang Van Thu Park, which are believed to be hotspots for demonstrations.



Img. 5 HCMC was surrounded by hundreds of police on June 17.

A near curfew was enforced when any individual could be stopped and have their body searched by the police. By the end of the day, there was no public gathering but police and security forces had arrested at least 179 people, according to an arrestee who managed to overhear a police conversation.

No arrest warrants were ever issued, and all those arbitrarily detained were taken to an improvised, newly set up police detention camp in Tao Dan park for screening and questioning. At least 40 of them, including women and elderly people, were seriously tortured by forces of police, public security officers, and “civil order defenders” using sticks, clubs, boots and green gloves.

A film director, known as Pham (32), was arrested when he was going for coffee near the city’s book street of Nguyen Van Binh. He was taken to Tao Dan’s “temporary holding camp,” where he was tortured by around 20 male and female police for five hours. He became unconscious and was taken to a hospital for emergency aid. (Read his story at the end of this report).

Trinh Toan (38) was one of the worst-injured victims of the torture. He was taken to a hospital in a coma and was said to suffer from hydrocephalus after a collective assault by these police. At the time of writing, he is still in the hospital for treatment. His wife, Nguyen

Thanh Loan, was also attacked and injured. She was then arrested at 11 pm June 25 on the way to visit him, and was not released until the early hours of the next day. The police “confiscated” all the cash that had earlier been donated to her as financial support.



Img. 6 Trinh Toan is suffering from hydrocephalus after being attacked by the HCMC police.

Nguyen Ngoc Lua (f.): “When I got there at around 8 a.m., they confined me to a closed room. My friend Trinh Toan was holding a helmet, and the police grabbed him by the helmet and then hit him on his head with that helmet. He fell down. His wife, Loan, came to hold him, asking, ‘why do you attack my husband?’ I saw the security officers kick her, then both Loan and her husband collapsed and fainted before my eyes.”

III. HIGHLIGHTED CASES FROM JUNE 17, 2018

1. Truong Thi Ha

Law student Truong Thi Ha¹ was taken into custody with two other friends when they were hanging out by the Notre Dame Cathedral Basilica of Saigon on June 17. The police of District 1 detained her at Tao Dan Park from 10 am to 9 pm. When Ms. Ha exercised her right to remain silent during the interrogation, she was repeatedly slapped in the head and beaten. The following day, on June 18, her landlord requested that she surrender her rental room even though their relationship had been entirely amicable in the past year. Ha suspected that the police had pressured her landlord to evict her.

2. Pham Thi Thanh Truc

Pham Thi Thanh Truc,² a student at the University of Economics of Ho Chi Minh City who participated in the June 10 demonstration, was also detained on June 17. The police forced her to sign a paper to admit that she had received money from “foreign forces” to attend the protest. When she refused, the police kicked her back so hard that she is now coughing blood. She is financially unable to receive a medical

¹ Truong Thi Ha’s Facebook (2018, June 28). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/htruongtoiyeuluat>

² Pham Thi Thanh Truc’s Facebook (2018, June 28). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/tru.truc.165>

check-up for the injuries caused by the police. All of her identification papers and cell phone are still being held by the authorities.

3. Uyen Phuong

Uyen Phuong¹ was hanging out with a friend and her small child in the morning of June 17 at the Cathedral and casually taking videos of the surrounding area when the police approached her and requested to examine the content of the videos. Phuong agreed but asked for the reason of such a request. In response, plain-clothed police then immediately carried her into a van. She asked for the identities of the people who arrested her and the reason for the arrest, only to be slapped in the face while they confiscated her phone. She was taken to Tao Dan Park, where she witnessed the police checking detainees' personal belongings, scanning their bodies, and brutally beating them. The police also loudly accused detainees of receiving money to protest and for committing crimes by holding up banners during the protest. She also saw a pregnant woman and her 4-year-old daughter being held there. Phuong was not released until 2 am the following day, even though she has a baby who is still nursing.

¹ Uyen Phuong's Facebook (2018, June 28). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/100010220342865/posts/666640107019995/>

4. Trinh Toan and Nguyen Thanh Loan

As stated previously, Trinh Toan and his wife Nguyen Thanh Loan, two activists in Ho Chi Minh City, were among those most severely injured by the police at Tao Dan Park on June 17. They were taken into custody as they waited for mass at the Cathedral. They were both beaten to the point of unconsciousness. Toan suffered severe head injuries, yet the hospitals refused to conduct a thorough check-up of him, due to pressure from the police. Loan ended up having to take her husband home and call private doctors to provide treatment.

Ms. Loan described¹ the torture she endured – in part – at Tao Dan Park on June 17 as follows: “Once in there; they did not care about asking anything but bashing me senselessly. They pulled my husband away. I saw them bashing him. I was so frightened by them ... They slapped my ear so hard that it was buzzing, and the sharp pain went up to my head. I did not know about anything else anymore, and I slumped down right there.”

Ms. Loan also witnessed how brutal the police had tortured other people: "There was a young fellow who came, his head was hit, and

¹ The English version of Nguyen Thanh Loan’s report (2018, June 24).

Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1895393320758321&id=100008630133556

blood streamed down the face and dropped on the floor. However, they forced that fellow to untie both of his shoes and coerced him to reveal the password of his phone. When he refused, they then used the batons to hit his toes. With each bashing, they asked: ‘Do you reveal or not? Do you reveal or not?’ The police hit him severely, and he screamed and moaned, the moaning was heartbreaking, but they kept torturing him.”

IV. POST-RALLY SUPPRESSION

The police have so far remained silent about allegations of attacking civilians and peaceful protesters. While the mainstream press has largely keep silent, a few major media agencies covered the incidents in a manner obviously biased against protesters.

More importantly, the police keep persecuting the arrestees and their families. Law student Truong Thi Ha, for instance, was expelled by her landlord under police pressure. She said she also was beaten up by several police officers right at her university and in her lecturers' presence after she refused to "cooperate" with them.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES CONCERNED

Until 2018, Vietnam has signed a number of international human rights treaties, the most important of which include:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (September 24, 1982);
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) (November 7, 2013).

Although under ICCPR, the Vietnamese government is obliged to guarantee its people the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, all forms of public gatherings in the country must be organized by or granted permission from the authorities; to obtain permission, people must follow the troublesome procedures of “registering.” They will otherwise be suppressed, often with violence, by the police. Many people have been imprisoned for “causing public disorder” under Article 245 of the Criminal Code, or fined under the 2005 Decree 38 on “measures to ensure public order.”

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on international human rights organizations and foreign embassies:

- to stand by and support the peaceful protestors who were brutalized on June 10 and June 17, 2018, while exercising their rights as guaranteed by their Constitution and the international treaties to which Vietnam is a signatory.
- to pressure the government of Vietnam to carry out prompt, impartial, independent, and effective investigations into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment made in the 40 cases we have documented.
- to continue to demand the Vietnamese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all detainees, including William Anh Nguyen.

ANNEXES

VnExpress: People In Many Provinces Took To The Streets, Causing Public Disorder¹

Many parts of HCMC, Khanh Hoa, Binh Thuan, etc. today are blocked by mobs opposing the SEZ bill, though its adoption has been postponed.

The Vietnam News Agency today reports that the Binh Duong police have arrested Tran Minh Hue (37) from Thanh Hoa and Nguyen Dinh Thanh (27) from Nghe An for printing brochures calling for people to illegally protest and cause public disorder.

Allegedly, these two people took advantage of the legislature's ongoing discussion on the 99-year leasing of land to print brochures that spread misleading information. Hue was caught disseminating brochures in the Song Than industrial zone, and the police confiscated thousands of brochures calling for people to protest the leasing of land for special economic zones.

¹ VnExpress (2018, June 6). People In Many Provinces Took To The Streets, Causing Public Disorder. Retrieved from <https://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/nguoi-dan-nhieu-dia-phuong-xuong-duong-gay-nao-loan-3761525.html>

Through the day of June 9, the HCMC police arrested other people committing the same crime.

Protest rallies are widespread today in Ho Chi Minh City, Khanh Hoa, Da Nang, Binh Thuan, and other urban cities.

In HCMC, since early in the morning of June 6, thousands of people rallied along the avenues of Nguyen Hue and Le Duan to the areas of the Cathedral and April 30 Park. Participants held aloft banners stating “objections to the SEZ bill.” After that, the mobs grew and caused traffic jams in many places.

The most serious traffic jam was found in the area of Tan Son Nhat airport in Tan Binh district. Since early morning, a great many people gathered around Hoang Van Thu Park, Lang Cha Ca Circle, and nearby sites, such as the streets of Nguyen Van Troi, Hoang Van Thu, Phan Dinh Giot, and Truong Son. As a result, the mob got bigger and traffic to the airport was blocked. Many passengers had to run a long distance into the airport, and many missed their flights by arriving late...

In Phan Ri Cua town of the Tuy Phong district, Binh Thuan province, groups of protesters gathered and blocked National Highway No. 1 in opposition to the SEZ bill. Their numbers grew as the day passed. Hundreds of police were mobilized to keep order. In

many places the mob reacted angrily to the police, with youths throwing stones and breaking police vehicles.

Mr. Nguyen Trung Truc, Deputy Chairman of the Tuy Phong People's Committee, said National Highway No. 1 was blocked from mid-day to 7 pm. "Police are trying to educate the people so that they are aware of the issue and the law, not to be incited by anti-state forces," he told the VnExpress...

Mr. Nguyen Manh Hung, leader of the Binh Thuan party cell, said the government does not ban the people from expressing their views, but the expression must be restricted to a permitted degree. "That the people blocked National Highway No. 1, causing traffic jams and committing provocative acts is unacceptable and shall be strictly punished," said Mr. Hung.

Today, Dong Nai, Khanh Hoa, and Hanoi saw people gathering in a similar way.

Mr. Ho Van Mung, head of the Khanh Hoa province's propaganda department, said many people cited the objection to the SEZ bill as a reason for them to protest. "Admittedly they are patriotic, but that patriotism must be relevantly expressed. They can't be patriotic by taking to the street and shouting." He said there had been no conflict between protesters and the law enforcement bodies.

The chief propagandist also believed that there were people with “anti-state plots” among the protesters today as a result of the previous text messages for rallies.

Today’s public gatherings took place in the context that the government has requested the national assembly to delay adoption of the SEZ bill until the next meeting session for further discussion. In the earlier debate, many deputies had raised their concern over the law that allows foreign investors to lease land for up to 99 years (compared to the current regulation of 70 years) with unneeded favorable conditions.

As Vietnam does not have any protesting law, all the appeals for protest rallies are deemed unlawful.

Territorizing The People To Protect Dictatorship¹

Pham, an independent film-maker, was detained by chance and was tortured by a mob of police (men and women) from 2 pm to 7-8 pm Sunday, June 17, at Tao Dan (district 1, TP. HCM). Below is his story, in which he chose to be anonymous only for fear that his family may know about the torture.

When I opened my eyes, I was in a hospital bed. There weren't any cops around. A nurse came and I found out that I was in the emergency room of a police hospital. That was about midnight. It seemed they had beaten me continuously from 2 pm until I passed out, then they tossed me in here and disappeared to avoid any responsibility. But it's also very possible that they're still on guard somewhere down the lobby.

The hospital asked for a 2 million dong fee (approximately 100 USD). I checked and found that they (the police) left me with my wallet and I still had a bit more than 100,000 dong. Nothing else. My phone was confiscated. All my family contact info was in the phone.

¹ Pham's story, reported by Pham Doan Trang journalist (2018, June 18). Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/pham.doan.trang/posts/10156747355408322>

The English version is available at:

<http://www.phamdoantrang.com/2018/06/terrorizing-people-to-protect.html>

My shoes were also gone. They took off my shoes and used them to hit my head hundreds of times. They used batons to crush my feet. There are bruises and cuts all over my body. It's painful just to move, even a little.

I wanted to go home. The doctor did not allow it, and said that he has to make sure I don't have blood clots in my brain, or any brain concussion (I don't know if he really was worried for my wellness, or if he's afraid of the policemen somewhere out there). "I'm not responsible if you die on the way home," he said. But I didn't have enough money to pay for the hospital fee. My head hurt, and I was dizzy. "I'm OK. I just want to go home and go to sleep... and let my family know of my whereabouts," I said. Looking at my swollen face, eyes blackened like a panda's, torn lips as big as a tomato, the nurse softly said: "Just go. Let's make it look like you left without proper discharging." She led me through a small door, via a private path, discreetly out of the hospital.

I dragged myself from the taxi to the front of my house and collapsed. That was about 1 am.

12 hours before, about 1 pm Sunday, June 17, I left home and went to District 1 to hang out. I've never seen that many cops and cop helpers (*dân phòng*, who are civil order defenders or civilians paid by

the government to keep peace) in the center of Saigon. The sidewalk and the coffee shops were full of green-cloth cops, cop helpers with red ribbons on their arms, and lots of big burly angry looking guys (translator: these are plainclothes thugs). They continuously grabbed and detained people. It's as if they would detain anyone who was walking by with a phone in their hand. They even went inside the cafe to check papers and pulled coffee shop patrons out and drove them away. Just like a war zone, where cops and cop helpers had full rights to stop and search and take anyone away.

I stopped by a cafe for a cup of coffee and went to the book street (translator: one of those rare streets still left in Saigon where books are sold). It seemed that the book street was shut down today. I proceeded a couple of meters and was stopped by a group of cops; perhaps they had targeted me somehow and I did not notice. They asked for my identity. My bad luck, I just went for coffee and I didn't have any pieces of identity with me. They asked me to tell my family to bring my identity card. As I called home, just after I said, "I got detained...", one of them yanked the phone from my hand. I protested, but they pushed me onto a car and sped away.

They took me into a big room in Tao Dan. There were people sitting everywhere, old and young, men and women. There were even some

wearing the traditional “ao dai.” They must be tour guides (translator: ao dai = Vietnamese traditional long dress). Later on I learned that the city cops detained 179 people at Tao Dan, including tourists, tour guides, and some seniors who had been doing their morning exercises. We were all detained. Even more ridiculously, we were all beaten too.



They took me into a room, took out my phone and asked for my password. I asked “Why did you take my phone?” I got a straight punch to the face. After that were a series of slaps. I still didn’t provide my password. They grabbed my hair, pushed my head down on the table and gave me another series of punches to my ears. They told each other that I am incorrigible and hard-core, and proceeded to bring me to a different room.

It turned out that in the first detaining room, I was the only one who didn’t give up the phone password, so they filtered people and moved them to a separate private room for more interrogating.

Once I was in the new private room, they jumped me right away. About 20 big strong men, both cops and plainclothes, surrounded and beat me with batons, sticks and of course, with their fists and feet.

I sat on the floor, huddled myself, covering my head. Two of them then pulled my hands behind my back while the rest of them punched my face. “Mother fucker, you think you’re tough?” they yelled at me while beating me.

They asked for some tech guys to break into my phone. While the tech guy was working on my phone for about 15-20 minutes, they beat me continuously. There were also some cute looking female cops slapping me until I could only see a blurry white shade. One of the older cops, about 60 years or more, was very good with his baton. All kinds of cops: young, old, men, and women were involved in the beating.

Finally, the tech guy got into my iPhone 5s. The cops yelled, “Mother fucker, you think you’re cool? You think we can’t hack your phone?” They cuffed my hands, and more beating followed. They beat me while “investigating” about each of the people on my contact list. “Who is this?”. “My FB friend”. “You met him? For what?”. “For coffee”. “Where? When?”. “Don’t remember”. “God damn, don’t remember? Don’t remember?”

For each of the “I don’t remembers” or “I don’t knows”, they used an iron stick to hit the soles of my feet. My feet were swollen, and I’m sure my face was too. One of them pulled my head back and they spit

on my face. “I hate the phrase ‘don’t know’ or ‘don’t remember.’ If you keep on saying that, I’ll keep beating you.”

“Who is this girl?”. “My friend”. “Girl friend? Did you fuck her? Did you...” There was no vulgar language that they did not use.

They took off my shoes and used them to beat my face. “Spread your legs”, they shouted. I was afraid they were going to beat my private parts, so I curled my self into a ball. Luckily, they didn’t hit me there, but only took off my shirt and pants. They punched and kicked my stomach and chest while screaming, “Do you believe that we can hang you up and beat you like a dog?”

They rested. I crawled on an exercise pad nearby (this is inside a exercise room, for athletes). One of them yelled: “God damn. You want a padded bed?” Then they pulled me by the legs down to the floor and continued to beat and stomp on me, just like that.

For a long while, maybe it was now late afternoon, they still didn’t stop. I couldn’t open my eyes anymore. When the last sun ray receded, my head was floating. They grabbed my head, pulled my hands, and tossed me out of the private room into the common area. I only heard people talking, crying, screaming. Lots of crying, not sure what they were crying about. I tried to open my eyes and realized they were crying for me. There were lots of people around me. Perhaps

they were beaten too, since lots of them had swollen faces. The very old people were beaten too. But they all looked at me and cried. They told each other: “Let’s cover the kid up.” Then a number of shirts were passed over, covering me.

Why does it look like Con Dao – like the stories told in literature and history (translator: Con Dao stories are the ones depicting the cruelty of French and American colonists upon revolutionaries, according to the revolutionaries’ point of view)? The only difference here is that the cops are sons and daughters of the revolutionaries of yesteryear, showing their true selves as cruel thugs, terrorizing the people to protect the dictatorship of the single political party. Cruel communists.

An older woman came over. She put my head on her thigh, put balm ointment on my forehead, held my hands and cried. I could not open my eyes to see her clearly. I tried to speak with my swollen lips, “Please don’t cry. You make me want to cry too.” I wanted to add, “I don’t want them to see our crying,” but my breath was short and I couldn’t speak.

I heard people talking: “Why did they beat the kid so badly?” Seeing that the air was tense, and that everyone loved me, and worrying that the crowd might react in a rebellious way, the cops ran in and pulled

me out. The old women burst out crying and asked, “You take me, cuff me, let the kid go. You’re going to beat him to death?”.

I tried hard to open my eyes to remember her face, but I couldn’t. My head was shutting down. The cops were tossing me into a car. (Later I learned that they sent me to the hospital.) Everyone was trying to keep me with them. The cops were pulling me. There were people trying to cover my body to avoid more beatings. The cops were still able to pull me away. The old woman ran after the car. They pulled her back and shut the door. I heard one of the cops say, “Fuck you. Nice play. Good acting to get those people crying?”.

After that, I didn’t know anything anymore. When I woke up, I was in the hospital but there was no treatment because the hospital fee was not paid.

That night, I slept like a log. The next morning, I went to hospital for a checkup. Lucky for me, I was just badly beaten, but I had no brain damage. The last two days, lots of friends came to visit. They all loved me, gave me money and lots of treats.

I still remember the people holding me, covering me, and sharing their shirts for me on that Sunday. Especially the old woman who was treating me like her own son, rubbing my forehead, holding my hand, and crying. I want to remember her face, but I couldn’t. Even her

name, I do not know. I don't recognize any of the people who were beaten that day. Those who tried to cover me, to protect and to encourage me in that horrific time. Those who shared the pain of the innocent people. Those who got detained lawlessly and were beaten as if they were the enemies.

During the whole time, I didn't remember any of the evil faces, but I was able to see one name tag on one of the cops: Nguyen Luong Minh. They didn't know who I was. Just because I didn't give up my phone password, they treated me this way. I don't understand how they would treat people that they refer to as "protesters", "human rights activists," or "dissidents." Besides myself, there were hundreds of people illegally detained that day, the old men, the young fresh students, the tour guides in *ao dai*...

Here, I would like to ask for any information about the woman who cried and held me that night. It was about 7-8 pm Sunday, June 17, in a room in Tao Dan.

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