

# Saigon Students' Bloody Protest

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## Saigon

Ten high school and university students, charged with illegal political activities, disrupted their first day in court last week by slashing their wrists and chests and shouting anti-government slogans.

The students, on trial for "engaging in activities harmful to the national security," were the first of scores arrested in the past five months to come to trial. The government charges against the students stem from their activities during the presidential campaign last autumn in which Nguyen Van Thieu was the only candidate.

Student protests have been on the rise during the past few weeks as several more student and faculty members have been arrested for political activities. Demonstrations have broken out in Hue and Saigon and ended in tear-gassing confrontations with riot police.

## RAZOR

The trial was brought to an abrupt end when one of the students, Le Van Nuoi, the 20-year-old chairman of the Saigon Student High School Association, pulled out a razor, slashed open several arteries in his arm, and began to write anti-government slogans on the courtroom wall. As military police watched in disbelief, other students on trial slashed their chests and arms and chanted slogans calling Thieu a military dictator and the Saigon regime a puppet government.

Relatives watching the trial screamed out in horror as they tried to reach their sons. The judges hurriedly left the room by a side door.

Le Van Nuoi's mother, in tears, said that her son was only demanding peace and an end to the war. Fifty Buddhist monks who were refused entrance to the trial demonstrated on the streets near the courthouse.

Immediately before the

courtroom demonstration began, the five military judges ruled that former Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky must appear in court to substantiate the students' claim that their activity was carried out at his request. The prosecution charged that the students had torn down posters of President Thieu.

## 5 MONTHS

The demonstration was finally broken up when military police grabbed the students and forcibly pushed them outside to a prison truck. They were then hauled to the prison where they have been awaiting trial for the past five months.

Several of the students are reported to be in critical condition after their courtroom slashings, but no substantiation has been available.

The ten students were the first to come to trial of an estimated 80 to 100 student leaders the government is holding on charges of having violated the national security clause of the Vietnamese constitution.