

# Vietnamese Prisoners' Torture Claim

By Chris Jenkins  
Dispatch News Service

## Washington

Prisoners rounded up in South Vietnam's latest series of mass arrests are being severely tortured, according to letters that have arrived here recently.

The letters were written by the prisoners and smuggled out of South Vietnam to this country via France.

"All our friends who have been arrested since April 1972 have been savagely beaten in the general headquarters of the Municipal Police," wrote one prisoner from Chi Hoa jail — near Saigon — in a letter dated June 12.

## TORTURES

Some of the tortures were described in an accompanying document prepared by the prisoners.

- A female student, Nguyen thi Yen, treasurer of the Saigon General Student Association, was arrested on June 6, and "beaten unconscious (when) a group of 12 torturers forced her to stand naked in front of them while her breasts were burned by lighted cigarettes."

- Another student, Trinh dinh Ban, president of the Federation of South Vietnamese Students, was reportedly "beaten about the face, his eyes wounded and infected to the point that he can no longer see clearly. Needles were stuck under his fingernails and he was beaten on the chest and on the soles of his feet, and is now incapable of moving."

- Another female student, Vo thi Bach Tuyet, "was beaten for several

weeks and then hung by the feet with another student for several weeks in a dungeon and subjected to very bright lights. Mice and ants were placed on her body. Later she was transferred to a flooded dungeon."

The prisoners' letters were distributed in France by the Vietnamese Catholic Movement for Peace.

Evidence of tortures in the Chi Hoa prison was given support by two Frenchmen, Jean Pierre Debreis and Andre Menras, who have been incarcerated since 1970 for having demonstrated in Saigon in favor of the National Liberation Front.

In letters published June 9, 1972 in L'Humanite, a French daily newspaper, the two Frenchmen spoke of "beatings with sticks and electric shock treatments," and other forms of torture.

## ISLAND

The letters from Vietnamese prisoners warn that "the government (of Saigon) is intending to send a certain number of students to the island prison of Con Son."

One letter dated June, 1972 to a Catholic father from a jailer on Con Son island reads:

"This afternoon, I went by a cell block being guarded by one of my colleagues, a jailer like myself. I almost fell over with astonishment when I saw only women, a few old people, and more than 50 children under nine years of age. They are all

from Hue and surrounding villages: Phu Cam, Phu Loc, Cau Hai. Several women are pregnant. And they have no idea why they have been brought here.

"There are about 1500 people like this..."

## REPORTS

According to various press reports, as many as 14,000 civilians a month have been arrested since the beginning of the North Vietnamese offensive in early April.

The Saigon government appears to fear the kind of urban battles that characterized the 1968 Tet Offensive when many National Liberation Front cadre were able to infiltrate all of South Vietnam's major cities. Consequently, grounds for suspicion and arrest have broadened significantly.

Under the South Vietnamese constitution any person who is a communist or a "pro-communist neutralist" can be jailed for a period up to two years, whereby the sentence is then subject to renewal.