

**Open letter from the Vietnam Women's Union
to the Judges of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals**

Hanoi, 13 March 2006

Esteemed Judges of the United States of America,

On behalf of all Vietnamese women, I would like to extend our respectful greetings to the judges of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals and appeal to you to reinstitute the lawsuit brought by Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange against U.S. chemical manufacturers.

As a woman's organization representing the rights and interests of Vietnamese women, we are concerned with the protection of women, mothers and children. Now, many of our women, mothers and children are experiencing terrible suffering as a result of the deeds of a number of U.S. chemical companies. In the 1960's the toxic chemical, Agent Orange, was manufactured by these companies and sold to the U.S. Army which sprayed it over the people and land of Vietnam.

Millions of Vietnamese, the majority of whom are women, have been exposed to this deadly poison. Many have died from or live with fatal diseases. Young women cannot have children because they face miscarriages or bear stillborn infants. Others suffer the anguish of giving birth to babies with crippling physical and mental birth defects. In places where the American Army stored or sprayed Agent Orange, there have been an increasing number of fetal deformities. Women not directly exposed to Agent Orange have experienced reproductive complications or given birth to deformed babies due to their husbands' exposure.

Not coincidentally, the wives of US, Australian, New Zealand and South Korean veterans returning from Vietnam battlefields have also suffered similar effects of exposure to Agent Orange. This fate did not escape the families of leading US military officers: The son of US Admiral Zumwalt - Sublieutenant Zumwalt II - died of cancer due to Agent Orange exposure not long after returning home from Vietnam. His son - Admiral Zumwalt's grandson - who was born after his return from Vietnam, suffers a mental disability. And, this is just one among many cases in the United States

Agent Orange poisoning denies women the right to be mothers, irrespective of colour and who they are. The lethal shadow of death and genetic degeneration

caused by Agent Orange and dioxin is looming over the health and families of millions of women.

The women and child victims of Agent Orange ask that those who made this poison be held accountable! Any justification by the American chemical companies to elude their responsibility towards the victims is unjust and shameful.

In the name of the Vietnamese women who have died of Agent Orange,
In the name of the Vietnamese women who are dying agonizing deaths from diseases caused by Agent Orange,
In the name of the Vietnamese women who have been for years and years suffered in silence spiritual and physical pains; who are caring for severely disabled children who are the legacy of Agent Orange,

We, the Vietnam Women's Union, raise our voice to call upon the judges of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals to act for truth and justice. We urge you to reject defendants' justifications, reverse the decision of Judge Weinstein and reinstate the lawsuit of the Vietnamese victims.

We call upon the esteemed US judges to recognize our common humanity and to act to protect the sanctity of life on our shared planet.

All the best wishes of health and happiness!

**On behalf of the Vietnam Women's Union
Ha Thi Khiet**

President