Local rights groups have filed a complaint in Bangkok against a second Thai sugar firm with ties to business tycoon Ly Yong Phat accused of stealing homes and land from hundreds of poor farmers.

Licadho and Equitable Cambodia filed the complaint with the Thai government’s National Human Rights Commission on May 27 against Mitr Pohl on behalf of 602 families in Oddar Meanchey province, who say the firm’s three plantations allegedly forced them out of their homes and off their land.

It follows a similar complaint the Community Legal Education Center, a local legal aid group, filed with the Thai commission in 2010 against Thai firm Khon Kaen Sugar, also once tied to Mr. Yong Phat, for allegedly forcing hundreds of families off their land in Koh Kong province. The commission said the firm had breached the families’ human rights in a preliminary report last year. The families are also suing British sugar giant Tate & Lyle in London for buying the sugar grown on those plantations from Khon Kaen.

Rights groups have accused Mitr Pohl of encroaching on the land of more than 2,000 families since the government granted it three plantations totaling some 20,000 hectares in Samraong City and Chongkal district in 2007. But Equitable Cambodia executive director Eang Vuthy said Sunday that many have moved away since losing their land.

Of the 602 families that did join, Mr. Vuthy said, more than 200 had lost their homes, some of them burned down or bulldozed both by plantation workers and state security forces. “The rest have lost their [farm]land or community forest, so they want their land back or compensation from the company,” he said.

He said a few families were offered a few hundred dollars, nowhere near what they believe they deserve.

The rights groups also accuse the plantations of killing their livestock and looting their crops. The police and military police are accused of beating some of the farmers and threatening them with violence or arrest. Two villagers have already spent two years in jail on charges of clearing state forest. Others have fled in fear of arrest and never returned.

Samraong City governor Thon Nol confirmed that Mr. Yong Phat was president of the three Mitr Pohl subsidiaries running each of the plantations but declined to say how much of each he owned. He referred questions about the forced evictions to Wath Tarin, head of the province’s resettlement committee, who declined to comment.

Representatives for Mitr Pohl and Mr. Yong Phat could not be reached.

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