

Christian Worshipers Brutally Beaten in Vietnam

✖ A violent attack against indigenous minority Christians in the central highlands of Vietnam has left 16 men and women severely injured and one man still under arrest; his welfare remains unknown to date, according to a report from International Christian Concern.

To be sure, the systematic persecution of Degar Montagnard Christians continues, with this brutal attack as proof of the regime's purposeful policing, harassment, and aggressive oppression of this indigenous people and minority religious group.

On July 7, at approximately 8 p.m., Vietnamese security forces and police descended upon a worship service in the village of Buon Kret Krot (H'Ra commune, Mang Yang district, Plei Ku city, in Gai Lai province), and began kicking and beating the attendees. Security forces threatened the villagers, stating: "If anyone worships like this way, we will return to arrest you all and put you in prison for five years."

Twelve men and four women were beaten, and of these, 10 men and two women were violently beaten to unconsciousness. Police beat A Jung, a 29-year old male, repeatedly with a baton until he collapsed

to the
ground where they continued to kick and stomp on his stomach
and back
until he lost consciousness. Jung was taken away by police and
remains
in custody; he has likely experienced torture while
imprisoned.

Other
villagers were beaten with batons, firearms and tree branches,
and
kicked and stomped upon by the Vietnamese security forces. The
youngest
victim was Y Kang, a 13-year old girl.

Vietnam has a
long-standing practice of policing, harassing and arresting
Christians
who are unaffiliated with the government-sanctioned and only
legally-recognized religious bodies in the nation.

Scott
Johnson, with the Montagnard Foundation, says: "The Vietnamese
government
has targeted indigenous Degar Montagnards for simply being
members of
Christian house churches, in a long-running policy designed to
eliminate
independent Christian house churches. Hundreds of Degar
Montagnards
remain in prison today and in custody many prisoners are
brutally
tortured and even killed.

"There is a shameful silence from the
international community, including the United Nations and
State
Department, as to the plight of these forgotten prisoners even

while the
evidence of systematic religious persecution is overwhelming.”

According
to Human Rights Watch, since 2001 more than 350 Degar
Montagnards have
been arrested and sentenced to long prison sentences on
vaguely-defined
charges that are considered to be subversive to the Vietnamese
regime.

ICC’s Regional Manager for Southeastern Asia, Kris Elliott,
said: “We
call upon the Vietnamese government to cease this systematic
practice
of violence and persecution against Christians, especially
Degar
Montagnards.

“We also urge the U.S. Department of State to once again
designate Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern, as
conditions for
religious minorities have vastly deteriorated since the
designation was
lifted in 2006. A CPC designation backed by strong U.S.
policies has the
potential to pave a path towards significant improvements for
Christians
and other religious minorities in Vietnam.”