

Persecution Watchers Keeping Closer Eye on Vietnam

✖ It's a sad day when governments use Christmas as a vehicle for persecuting believers.

Of course, it's not a new strategy. But it's one that the Vietnamese government used in December—and it's causing persecution watchers to start monitoring Vietnam more closely again.

According to International Christian Concern (ICC), Vietnam used the Christmas holiday to crack down on Montagnard believers. Claiming that peaceful Christmas services were a political threat, Vietnamese officials surrounded gatherings and enforced a law making it unlawful for Montagnard Christians to gather. Consider these three incidents:

- On December 23, 2010, a villager named A Nhang was slapped in the face and kicked for challenging the police's right to stop a Christmas service at the village of Buon Hamong K'tu. Another villager named A Thao subsequently stated, "We are here only to worship our Lord and not do anything to oppose the Government." A security officer, identified as Nguyen Van Niem, then reportedly struck A Thao in the back twice with a baton and responded by saying that he should not have spoken.
- On December 24, 2010 at the village of Buon Kret Krot, security forces destroyed Christmas decorations and a nativity scenes that the local villagers had decorated.
- On December 24, 2010, security forces surrounded the house church at Buon Dak Kang village while confiscating religious items from the church. A female villager confronted them asking, "Why are you taking away our possessions? Why have you done this? Why can't we worship our Lord?" A security forces assaulted her,

shoving her to the ground.

“This treatment of Christians exposes the true lack of religious freedom in Vietnam,” says Logan Maurer, ICC’s Regional Manager. “In 2006 the U.S. State Department removed Vietnam from the Country of Particular Concern list, citing progress in religious freedom. Clearly events like this show what really is happening behind closed doors: religious freedom in the highlands of Vietnam is a convenient falsehood. We urge the U.S. and other governments to exert influence all on Vietnam to improve its treatment of religious minorities. ”