

24 Newly Saved Believers Gravely Injured in Mob Attack

Four Vietnamese Christian families—24 people in all—have been attacked by a mob led by the village chief, local sources have revealed to World Watch Monitor.

Four people were hospitalised for eight days after the March 1 attack, with injuries to their heads and arms.

All four families are from the Hmong people group and only recently converted to the Christian faith.

The provincial authorities had advised them against continuing with their newfound faith, World Watch Monitor understands, and village leaders told them that unless they renounce Christianity they will be forced to leave their village.

The families' pastor is understood to be in talks with local authorities about the incident.

Among the one million Hmong in Vietnam, there are an estimated 400,000 Christians—a higher proportion than in Vietnam's population as a whole (about nine per cent). The religious transformation of the people group has been described as "remarkable". The Hmong, just like Vietnam's other Christians, face threats to their religious freedom through the government's new Law on Belief and Religion, which came into effect this year and has, so far, been used to criminalise a Catholic mass.

Vietnam's Hmong live mainly in the country's northwest and central highlands.

The repression by the Vietnam government of religious and other freedoms has been raised at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council, currently meeting in Geneva.

President of the Paris-based Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR), Vo Van Ai, told the Council yesterday, (14 March): “Vietnam claims there are no political prisoners, only people who have ‘violated the law.’ But the fact is that Vietnam’s domestic legislation is incompatible with international law. Instead of developing the rule of law, Vietnam is enforcing the rule by law, by adopting a whole arsenal of legislation that nullifies human rights”.

Van Ai expressed particular concern about the “national security” provisions in the newly amended Criminal Code, which came into force in January 2018. These security provisions are “systematically invoked to detain political and religious dissidents, human rights defenders and civil society”, he said.

In its latest report, the VCHR said the “arrests and harsh convictions of dissidents are multiplying with frightening speed” after it documented that, since January 23, 16 activists had been sentenced to a total of 95 years in prison.

Earlier this year the Former Vietnamese Prisoners of Conscience described 2017 as the “worst year” for dissidents, while the US State Department said it was “deeply troubled” by the 14-year-prison sentence given to Catholic activist Hoang Duc Binh. {eoa}

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