

Laos Village Churches See More Arrests

Armed police have arrested 20 Christians found worshipping in the home of a Laos village pastor. Arrested on Jan. 4 and Jan. 5, these believers were accused of holding secret meetings.

The new round-up of Christians in Nakoon, Hinboun District, comes in the wake of the renewed persecution and forced relocation of Christians in Katin, Ta-Oyl District which began at Christmas.

Southeast Asian Director Stephen Van Valkenburg of Christian Aid Mission has confirmation from reliable indigenous leaders that government officials renewed their persecution of Laotian Christians over the Christmas holidays. Local officials reportedly expelled 15 more believers and seven families from their homes and destroyed rice fields in an attempt to starve Christians out of the Katin area.

Three days after forcing the families out, the village chief and other officials reportedly burned down the fences around the believers' rice paddies and farmlands. Dikes were destroyed and water drained from rice paddies. Officials reportedly trampled through the crops, destroying all seedlings to prevent a winter harvest.

The expulsion of these seven Katin Christian families came after official warnings issued two months ago. At that time, the Katin chief and the head of the village religious affairs warned the Christians against continuing to exercise their religious freedom and holding to their Christian faith.