

Report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- Does the incident involve an individual or a group?

Since May 2013, the district government of Dak Glei and province of Kontum sent out decision to dismantle the temporary church of the Parish of Dak Jak (a parish of 5059 parishioners, re-established after 1975) which was built in April 2013. The government does not recognize the parish of Dak Jak, thus does not allow to build the church and does not allow the diocese to assign resident priest at the parish. In January 7, 2015, the government gave an ultimatum for the church to be dismantled before January 17, 2015 and the Parish pastor Rev. Daminh Tran Van Vu to leave the Parish. From January 13, thousands of Dak Jak parishioners come to the church every day and night to pray and to protect the church and the priest from the government attempt to execute the decision.

- If it involves a religious or belief group please state the number of people involved and the denomination of the group:

Total of 5059 parishioners, with 4819 ethnic minorities Sedan, Ho Lang, Jeh and 240 Vietnamese Kinh. All live in the Dak Mon, Dak Ang and Dak Long hamlets.

- Country(ies) in which the incident took place: Socialist Republic of Vietnam

- Nationality(ies) of the victim(s): Vietnamese

- Does domestic law require (re-)registration of religious associations and if yes, what is the current status of the group in question?

Vietnam's 2004 Ordinance on Religion and Belief requires that all religious organizations must be registered. The Dak Jak Parish belong to the Diocese of Kontum, which is considered registered under Catholics Church of Vietnam. Even though with the large congregation, the government does not recognize the Dak Jak Parish, thus do not allow to build a church and accepting the resident pastor assigned to come and serve the parishioners. The Bishop of Diocese of Kontum, Bishop Michael Hoang Duc Oanh, have submitted multiple requests to re-establish the parish without success.

2. IDENTITY OF THE PERSONS CONCERNED

Note: if more than one person is concerned, please attach relevant information on each person separately.

Primary victim:

- Family name: Tran

- First name: Vu

- Denomination of his/her religion or belief: Catholic

- Place of residence or origin: Village (ấp) Dak Jak – Hamlet (xã) Dak Mon, Dak Ang, Dak Long – District (huyện) Dak Glei – Province (tỉnh) Kontum.

-Telephone: 011 84 098487830

- Age: 40 (1974)

- Sex: Male

- Nationality(ies): Vietnamese

Other victims / witnesses:

Bishop Michael Hoang Duc Oanh, Bishop of Diocese of Kontum.
Address: 146 Tran Hung Dao St., city of Kontum, Vietnam
Tel.: 011 84 090-9274-705

Parish of Dak Jak : 5059 parishioners
Address: Làng Dak Jak, xã Dak Mon/Dak Long/Dak Ang, huyện Dak Glei, Tỉnh Kontum

3. INFORMATION REGARDING THE ALLEGED VIOLATION

- Date and time (approximate, if exact date is not known): January 7 - 14, 2015
- Place (location and country/countries): Làng Dak Jak, xã Dak Mon/Dak Long/Dak Ang, huyện Dak Glei, Tỉnh Kontum

Catholic Church geographical unit: Dak Jak Parish, Diocese of Kontum

- Please provide a detailed description of the circumstances of the incident in which the alleged violation occurred respectively the nature of the governmental action:

After April 30 1975 event, many villagers from Dak Jak, Dak Tuk and other villages which were dispersed during the war, came back to settle and create a parish community named Dak Jak with some Yao Phu (religious leaders) and seminarians who help to serve the congregation. The parish was persecuted intensely during the 1975-1984 period. There was no priest or church for gathering because the government strictly forbid all religious presence. Parishioners practiced their faith at home and baptized secretly. From 1984 to 1988, the parish Yao Phu Group was established to help the parish with the appropriated sacraments. During this time, more than ten seminarians were captured and jailed for many years in prisons. From 1988 to 2004, Father Simon Phan Van Binh was assigned to serve the parish. Father Nguyen Thanh Liem was assigned to serve at Dak Jak from 2004 to 2011. The parish continues to grow in number of parishioners and services, still without a church and a resident priest. All religious activities were served on the open ground or at private residence while the assigned priests came doing the sacraments and came back to Kontum.

In November 11, 2011, Bishop Oanh assigned Fr. Tran Van Vu, the first resident pastor for the Parish of Dak Jak, without the agreement from the government. The government considers the presence of Fr. Vu in Dak Jak is not legal per the requirements of the Vietnam law. With growing demand to serve for such a large congregation, Fr. Vu and the parishioners tried to build a very rude, simple and temporary church (chapel), with only the tin roofs and wooden poles and no walls, good enough for the congregation to hide under the sun and rain during services. The parishioners in Dak Jak acknowledged that their lives (both spiritually and materially) have been improved steadily since the presence of Fr. Vu. Many outside funding resources are coming to help the parishioners with their farming activities. Many young men and women volunteer to serve the community or receive career trainings to find jobs. Fr. Vu has been receiving the eviction orders a few times but he said that he is not only a citizen but also a priest who is assigned by the church and the Bishop to come to serve the parish. He can only obey the Bishop, not the order of government which is against the need of the people. Even with many requests from the parish and the diocese for the recognition of the Parish, due to the enormous need of the congregation, the government only promises and do not have any concrete decision.

In September 2014, the district government and the Internal Affairs office of Kontum province signed an agreement with Bishop Oanh that when dismantling the temporary church, they will allow to build the church in a permanent lot belong to the diocese. In January 7, 2015, after a two and half hours and tense negotiation between Bishop Oanh and the government, the final outcome came as a shock to the Dak Jak Parish: the church has to be dismantled by January 17, and Father Vu Van Tran will be expelled from the parish and no priest will be allowed in the county of Dak Glei. The parishioners at Dak Jak were extremely disappointed and totally lost faith with the government. A confrontation between the parish and the government is imminent. In January 14, the district police chief and 5 local polices came into the center of the church while hundreds of parishioners are praying. The police were surrounded by the parishioners until Fr. Vu came to bring them to the office. After the incident, the government promised again to resolve the issue but nothing has happened while the parishioners are still watching out for the safety of their pastor and the existence of church.

- Which indications exist that the victim(s) has been targeted because of his/her religion or belief?

The government has denied the right of the Catholics in the Dak Jak community to practice their religion by not allowing the priests to perform sacraments for the parishioners. They are also denying the basic need of the congregation to have a church for their religious activities, even a temporary one. The government denied Fr. Vu Tran his right to serve his church and obey his religious authority. Bishop Hoang Duc Oanh has been denied the right to assign his associate to come and serve his people in need. The government ultimatum to dismantle the temporary church by force is a threat for the parishioners of Dak Jak. The action of police walked into the middle of the church during a worship session is a disrespectful action for their religion and promote confrontation.

- Identification of the alleged perpetrator(s), name(s) if known and/or function, suspected motive:

Mr. Pham van Long: Associated Director of Internal Affairs – Province of Kontum
Mrs. Y Thi Bich Tho: Chairwoman of People Committee of Dak Glei District

- Are the perpetrator(s) known to the

victim? Yes

- Are state agents or non-state-actors believed to be responsible for the alleged violation?

They are local government officials responsible for the government decisions on this matter.

4. STEPS TAKEN BY THE VICTIM, HIS/HER FAMILY OR ANYONE ELSE ON HIS/HER BEHALF?

- Please indicate if complaints have been filed, when, by whom, and before which State authorities or competent bodies (i.e. police, prosecutor, court):

On January 15, Mr. Tony Tran, the spoke person for Con Dau Parishioners Association, interviewed Fr. Vu of the incident to collect information to file the report to the UN Special Rapporteur.

- Were any other steps taken?

The victims (Bishop Hoang Duc Oanh, Rev. Tran Van Vu, Dak Jak parishioners) were interviewed by reporter Gia Minh of the Voice of America radio January 14, 2015.

- Steps taken by the

authorities: None

- Indicate whether or not, to your knowledge, there have been investigations by the State authorities; if so, what kind of investigations? Please indicate progress and status of these investigations as well as which other measures have been taken?

None

- In case of complaints by the victim or its family, how have those authorities or other competent bodies dealt with them? What has been the outcome of those proceedings?

5. IDENTITY OF THE PERSON OR INSTITUTION SUBMITTING THIS FORM

INSTITUTION:

Con Dau Parishioners Association
205 Braebrook Way
Cary, NC 27519
Phone: 1-919-637-0699
Email: condau@yahoo.com
Contact: Tony Tran

- Status: individual, group, non-governmental organization, religious or belief group, intergovernmental agency, Government. Please specify: religious group.

Non-profit organization

-Do you act with knowledge and on behalf of the victim(s)?

Yes. The witnesses asked that we file this report.

Please state whether you want your identity to be kept confidential:

It is fine to publish my identity.

March 2, 2015

Signature of the author

The following individuals support the statement of the author:

Fr. Tran Van Vu
