

Incident Report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief
Brutal beating and torture of Mrs. Tran Thi Hong,
wife of imprisoned Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- Does the incident involve an individual or a group? An individual
- If it involves a religious or belief group please state the number of people involved and the denomination of the group: N/A
- Country(ies) in which the incident took place: 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?

The Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions of 2004 and Decree 92 on 2012 on its implementation require that all religious groups in Vietnam register for government approval in order to conduct religious activities. Without the approval from the government, religious activities of independent individuals or groups are deemed illegal and these practitioners often face severe persecution by the Vietnamese authority.

2. IDENTITY OF THE PERSONS CONCERNED

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

- Family name: Tran
- First name: Hong
- Denomination of his/her religion or belief: Lutheran
- Place of residence or origin: Hoa Lu ward, Pleiku city, Gia Lai province, Vietnam
- Age:
- Sex: Female
- Nationality(ies): Vietnamese

3. INFORMATION REGARDING THE ALLEGED VIOLATION

- Date and time (approximate, if exact date is not known): 8:30 AM April 14 2016 (Vietnam time)
- Place (location and country/countries): Hoa Lu ward, Pleiku city, Gia Lai province, Vietnam
- Please provide a detailed description of the circumstances of the incident in which the alleged violation occurred respectively the nature of the governmental action:

At about 8:30 AM local time on April 14th 2016, Mr. Nguyen Van Dang, the head of the residential block where Mrs. Hong's house is located, and a number of unidentified men wearing plain clothes came to Mrs. Hong's house and "invited" her to the People's Committee Office of Hoa Lu ward for a "working session". Mrs. Hong declined and said that she needed to get her children ready and take them to school. She told them that if they wanted to invite her, they should have informed her ahead of time and allowed her sufficient time to make arrangements for her young children so that she can make it to their office.

These men continued to pressure her to follow them. When she refused to leave her young children at home alone, three of the men walked around and stood behind her. Having experienced similar situation in the past, she asked them: "What are you trying to do to me?"

“Come with us to our office for a working session”, these men said. Then 4 of them grabbed her. Two men held her arms, and two held her legs. She screamed, “this is an unacceptable behavior. You said that you invite me, but you use force to make me go with you”. They ignored her words and carried her to a car waiting nearby and pushed her into the back of the car. They got in a car with Mrs. Hong; two sat in the front and two in the back, sitting on either side of her and holding her arms behind her back for the duration of the trip to the People’s Committee Office.

When they arrived at the People’s Committee Office of Hoa Lu ward, they carried her by her arms and legs upstairs to the 3rd floor. They shoved her into a room where a few more people were waiting, and locked the door. Mrs. Hong said, “Let go of me.” A woman got up and slapped Mrs. Hong in the face twice.

At that time, there were 6 people in the room with Mrs. Hong: 3 men and 3 women. They were wearing plain clothes; none of them wore uniform or name tags, and they did not identify themselves, so Mrs. Hong did not know the names or titles of the perpetrators. However, she did recognize that these men had followed her and her children previously. Therefore, she believes they are the undercover public security agents from Pleiku City and Gia Lai Province. They did a body search on Mrs. Hong to make sure she did not have any mobile phone or other recording device on her.

Then two women pulled on Mrs. Hong’s hair and held her arms, and one woman held her legs. They pushed her head down onto the sofa in the room while the men repeatedly kicked and pounded on her. In between rounds of beating, they paused and asked if Mrs. Hong agreed to “work” with them and tell them about her meeting with the US delegation on International Religious Freedom, led by Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Ambassador David Saperstein, on March 30th 2016. (Please see photo attachment #1 taken during that meeting at her house. Please also view the following video clip of an interview with Mrs. Tran Thi Hong in which she described the situation around the meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZLI32UMpEc>).

Mrs. Hong said, “You use force to bring me here and beat me for no reason. This is not working; this is torturing.” And they beat her again.

Despite her begging them to let her go so that she could pick up her children from school, they continued to take turn to beat her. They used filthy language to curse her. The words the public security agents used were so vulgar that Mrs. Hong was too embarrassed to repeat; therefore, they are omitted in this report. They accused her husband, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, who is currently serving his 11-year imprisonment sentence in An Phuoc Prison, Binh Duong Province, to be a reactionary element, guilty of opposing the Communist party and the Vietnamese government. (Please reference the document <http://dvov.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/protestant-lutheran-summary-notes.pdf> for more information about Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh.)

The undercover public security agents continued to beat and interrogate her for almost 3 hours. At first, Mrs. Hong tried to call out for help. But later she was in so much pain that she was unable to speak. She could only close her eyes and pray that God would save her life and protect her family.

At around 11:30 AM, when the perpetrators realized they could not get any statement from her despite their brutal beating, the three men and one of the three women left the room. The other two women pulled her up and sat her on the sofa; then they sat on either side of her. At this time, a public

security agent wearing uniform entered the room, followed by a man with a video camera. The man in uniform sat down at the table and began to write a report while the other man videotaped.

When he finished writing the report, the public security agent in uniform told Mrs. Hong she could leave. At this point, Mrs. Hong suffered from such excruciating pain that she could not get up. Her legs and knees were bruised and swollen due to the kicking and stomping by the perpetrators. So she had to crawl out of the room into the hallway. When she tried to hold on to the handrails and wanted to crawl down the staircases, probably because the perpetrators did not want her to fall down the stairs, they came and carried her downstairs by her arms and legs. They put her in a car, drove to about 20 m from her house; then they opened the car door and threw her out onto the pavement and drove away. Some of Mrs. Hong's neighbors saw her collapsed on the pavement, so they came and helped to carry her home. (Please see photos #2 and #3, showing the terrible condition Mrs. Hong was in when she got home.)

24 hours after the incident, Mrs. Tran Thi Hong has not been able to go to the hospital to get a medical exam because she is still in so much pain and unable to move. In addition, she states that undercover public security agents are still monitoring outside her house and would not allow her to leave her house.

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

Mrs. Tran Thi Hong's husband, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, was the director of the Vietnam-U.S. Lutheran Alliance Church (VN-US LAC). Not only their application to register with the Government Committee for Religious Affairs (GCRA) in 2010 was rejected, several church leaders were persecuted. Pastor Chinh was arrested in 2011. He was prosecuted for "sabotaging the solidarity policy, sowing division between citizens and the government" and sentenced to 11 years imprisonment.

Mrs. Tran Thi Hong was the target for retributions several times previously. But this particular incident was the result of her meeting on March 30th 2016 with the US delegation led by Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Ambassador David Saperstein. Included in the delegation were Mr. David V. Muehlke (Political Officer of the US Embassy in Hanoi), Mr. Garrett Harkins (Political Officer of the US General Consulate in Saigon), and Ms. Victoria L. Thoman (Officer of East Asia & Pacific Office of International Religious Freedom).

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

The perpetrators were wearing plainclothes. They did not wear name tags and did not identify themselves, so the victim did not know their names or titles. However, the victim did recognize that these men had followed her and her children previously. So she believes they are undercover public security agents from Pleiku City and Gia Lai Province.

The victim believes their motive is to stop her from speaking up and communicating with the international community about the harsh condition her husband is suffering in prison and the suppression she and her children suffer as the result of exercising their right to freedom of religion.

- Are the perpetrator(s) known to the victim?

The victim does not know the names of the perpetrators, but she recognized them as the unidentified men frequently follow her.

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

The perpetrators were led to her house by the head of the residential block, whose salary is paid by the government, so these men must also be employed by the government. Also, the perpetrators used a government building (the People's Committee Office) as a place for committing their violent act. So this must be an action sanctioned, if not ordered, by the government.

- If the perpetrators are believed to be State-agents, please specify (police, military, agents of security services, unit to which they belong, rank and functions, etc.), and indicate why they are believed to be responsible; be as precise as possible.

The perpetrators are believed to be undercover public security agents from Pleiku City and Gia Lai Province.

- If identification as State agents is not possible, do you believe that Government authorities or persons linked to them, are responsible for the incident, why? _____

- If there are witnesses to the incident, indicate their names, age, relationship and contact address. If they wish to remain anonymous, indicate if they are relatives, by-passers, etc.; if there is evidence, please specify.

The victim was taken into a government building, locked up in a room and beat up, so there were no eye witnesses when that happened. But her neighbors found her collapsed on the pavement near her house and helped to carry her home. They knew of her terrible condition after her release. But to protect their safety, the victim did not want to disclose her neighbors' identity.

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):

Not yet. It was only 24 hours after the incident, and the victim is still too weak to take any action to file a complaint yet.

- Were any other steps taken?

The victim reported the incident in an interview with Radio Free Asia (RFA).

- Steps taken by the authorities:

Secret public security agents continue to monitor the victim's house and her activities.

- 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? N/A

5. IDENTITY OF THE PERSON OR INSTITUTION SUBMITTING THIS FORM

- Family name: Nguyen

- First name: Michelle

- Contact number or address (please indicate country and area code): 290 Chandler Ct, Sugar Hill Georgia, 30518, United States

- Fax: _____

- Telephone: 1-404-409-9722

- Email: sgnumber1@yahoo.com

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

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

- Please state whether you want your identity to be kept confidential: No. It's OK to use my identity.

Date you are submitting this form: April 14th 2016

Michelle Nguyen
Signature of the author

Photo attachment #1: [TranThiHong-March-30-2016.jpg](#)

Mrs. Tran Thi Hong and her children with from left to right (back row): Mr. David V. Muehlke (Political Officer of the US Embassy in Hanoi), Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom: Ambassador David Saperstein , Mr. Garrett Harkins (Political Officer of the US General Consulate in Saigon), and Ms. Victoria L. Thoman (Officer of East Asia & Pacific Office of International Religious Freedom).



Photo attachments #2 and #3: [TranThiHong-1.jpg](#) and [TranThiHong-2.jpg](#)

Mrs. Hong's neighbors helped to carry her home, and Mrs. Hong collapsed on the floor when she got home.

