

Report # 2

Subject: Facts in relation to the events occurring from 9 June 2014 to 17 June 2014: Attacks led by the public security agents and their gang of thugs against the My Phuoc Mennonite Church, Ben Cat, Binh Duong Province.

I-Summary:

After storming the prayer house, the police and their thugs searched, beat up and stripped to the waist the people inside, then escorted the latter (76 in total) with the hands clasped behind their necks to the police station. There, these people composed of believers, pastors and Church personnel, were harassed and interrogated throughout the night by the police agents.

Moreover, the agents pound continuously the 23 young female students of ethnic minorities who were studying the Bible at the prayer house as they were singing hymns to keep their composure in the face of such barbarous acts of the public security agents (perpetrated from the night of 9 June 2014 to the early hours of 10 June 2014).

In addition to the above, they shut off the electricity and water supply to the prayer house, an incredible inhumane act, as the house and the day care center are sheltering 160 persons.

Subsequent to that, in the nights of 12, 13 and 14 of June until the dawn of 15, 16 and 17 of 2014, the security agents held their positions in front of the house, inside coffee shop, barber and billard shops Along the portion N6a of D10 Street up to the exit of D10-D11 to Highway 13, were terrible scenes of destruction caused by the local “mafia” in front the indifferent eyes of public security agents, who may have sponsored or promoted those activities against the Mennonite Church.

Afer the house was vandalized, rotten eggs thrown and rubber bullets shot, the students were obliged to use temporary wooden boards to cover the five windows and a number of doors in the front and side of the house to protect them from stoning. Also, they received threats via telephone calls demanding them to leave, otherwise the chapel will be bombed, leveled, or the occupants whacked. Those on the phone said they are neighbors and workers.

In fact, the neighbors or workers in the area are peaceful and innocent people, and the above impersonation is a real outrage to them because they are either faithful catholic belonging to My Phuoc parish, or workers away from home and who came here for temporary work; therefore, they are not the type of people to do such nonsense.

With the neighbors and workers (described above) around them, the Mennonite members thought they were now in peace. However, in reality it is totally different: the public security office sent Mr. Loi, an agent, to come and ask us to list all the occupants of the house. Thereafter, they invited our group to come for

interrogation in two waves at the police station of Thoi Hoa Ward: each wave consists of 26 persons. This showed that the local authorities (security police) paid special attention to our presence as they came many times to investigate us. It appears that this is an anormal situation.

II-Interrogation session with the students:

The following are what happened in the police station. The Mennonite students were asked about their family status, relatives and the way the Bible was being taught at the house: Who teaches what? Who introduces them to this school? Who pays for these classes? ... Afterward they distorted the facts and swayed the students in admitting things that do not exist (as usually did the Vietnamese Communist public security agents). The following are the examples of acts of swaying and fact of distortion:

1/ Claim that the Mennonite Church at My Phuoc is illegal as it was not recognized neither at home by the State nor by international Mennonite Church, and is deemed to be expelled from the official Mennonite Church?

2/ Mr. Quang was quoted saying to be a self-proclaimed pastor, who opened classes to teach the Bible, which is illegal. "You, student, please quit the Mennonite school to return home and we (public security officers who interrogated them) will reimburse your transportation or parking fees if any". A student named A Bung stated that: "a Lieutenant Colonel of the security force said that he has four diplomas, and he is more than capable of teaching Pastor Quang."

3/ Again and again, the agents forced the students to describe their identities in the ID reports again and again (although it is absurd; but they have no other choice except to comply).

4/ In particular, the security agents wrote false reports and asked the student's representative to sign on these, such as "the head of household, Mr. Nguyen Hong Quang did not register the 26 young students in list # 1, as per regulation." If the students said otherwise, they were forced to re-state and get fingerprint to attest. To cite an example, Giang Mi Xa, once back to the house, told the others what has happened to her and asked them for forgiveness. In fact, almost all of those who learned the Bible as her had already registered and still kept their certified documents. In her case, she was forced to say she didn't register.

5/ In the case of student Sam Van Hong (head of the class) and Pastor Tran Minh Hoa (in charge of My Phuoc prayer house and assistant-teacher responsible of the class in conjunction with Hong), they were interrogated a dozen of times by security officers about their displacements, illegal cases of temporary residence concerning the students although the latter did register. They were forced to list their names, ages, addresses, dates of birth. Those who don't have their personal papers with them were reported as not registered. This is really unfair!

Myself, personally, I also underwent the interrogation session with Mr. Chien, an officer with the local authorities, establishing the record file of displacements/relocalizations with the help of Ben Cat security agents. Although duly registered, the students were forced to return home, creating havoc to their

families. At the end, their studying and temporary residence became source of pain and misery for all of them, the school and their parents. (On 14 of March I was at work in the district office when a government official from another region showed up, and thinking I am a local security officer, presented himself as a provincial security officer and requested me to handle him the list of all temporary residents in Mr. Quang's house...)

6/ On 20 June 2014, student Hong is the person who registered many times and has completed 41 files registering for temporary residency for 41 persons. On 28 March 2014, Hong requested the security agent to give him a receipt (the previous times he did not do so, therefore there has been no proof of registration). Despite the fact that officer Nguyen Thai Hoa did give him a receipt, they (security agents) kept on denying it.

Only when we showed them the proof; then they admitted verbally. However, in all interrogation sessions and reports, they disavow it (probably they thought we lost the receipt). In general, most of those responsible for registering us believe us; while those at a higher level always stated in their reports that we did not register for temporary residency.

7/ Pastor Hoa already registered for temporary residency a list of 29 pastors arriving at the prayer house in the early morning of 9 June 2014. For the others, a few of them just arrived, and within 15 minutes managed to register before the cutoff time, which is 8:00 PM. In fact, most of the pastors thought that the 24 hours deadline has not passed yet, therefore they do not need to rush. The files at the prayer house did mention this incident, but the security agent did not write it in their report, hence there is no way to say who is right and who is wrong in this case.

III. What happened during the two interrogation sessions of me (Nguyen Hong Quang) with the public security agents:

1st session: I received the letter of invitation four times; I did not show up twice for personal reasons.

At 1:30 PM on 17 June 2014, I came to the public security station but when I arrived, Tan, the deputy chief of Thoi Hoa ward, who was supposed to meet me, was not there. In his place was the Lieutenant Colonel Le Ba Hoa, chief of the ward public security office, is the person who interrogated me that day.

-When we were face to face, Hoa did not say a word for a long moment neither to introduce him nor to state the reason of my invitation (not even a greeting word or gesture was addressed to me).

-Then he assigned Mr. Tri to write the report per his directive and this, without any word exchange occurring between him and me (I had the impression that he does not care about my presence or even the purpose of my visit here).

-I felt uneasy and asked: "why you did not introduce yourself and ask me questions, how can I sign on a document when no Q & A session has really taken place?" Upon which, Hoa replied by pulling out a printout from a nearby computer and showing the document file to me: "so what is this?"

-I argued with him: “Are we going to proceed as per letter of invitation or are we going to proceed per document from the computer? (the subject of the invitation is: do not allow administrative inspection, resist government officials on duty). He shouted at me “shut up, otherwise I will break your neck!” I responded “I will quit if you don’t change your way of proceeding this session; and if you replace Mr. Tan on this duty you need to introduce yourself”. This really made him angry and he started yelling and threatening me!

-I continued “if you shout, please do it in your room because it is not a place for such an attitude, please let somebody else do the interrogation with me!”

-He replied “how dare you dismissing me, I am the chief of public security office here? You may stay home and don’t show up to this session; and you will see what would happen to you!” (he stated with a threatening tone)

-I stood up and stopped any conversation with Lt. Col. Hoa (I was accompanied by a person from the Church so that he can witness and note the attitude of a public security officer when conducting this interrogation session).

-After that, I went with the witness to the town of Ben Cat public security office to report the incident. There, they took picture of me (see photo).

2nd session: After receiving the 4th letter of invitation the subject of which is: temporary residency. The following are the questions that were raised in the session and my corresponding answers:

Question 1: Why you did not register everybody for temporary residency? Does the house D-1 belong to you? Do you have any document to attest it? This house is owned by Mrs Dung, if you want to stay there, you should have somebody to sponsor you so that you can stay!”

I rejected such accusation as I had proof of temporary residency registration for all except the very young ones as the latter did not have the ID card; it is not something unusual that the 17-20 years old from ethnic minorities do not have the ID.cards. That is the reason why the police did not register them now. However, their names, dates of birth and addresses were on files. The only exception is the new students and pastors who showed up within the last 24 hours, that is too short a period to be able to register on time; and for that reason, I bear full responsibility and I did apologize for these cases. However, those rarely happened.

My house stood on a residential area; I have a building permit, and a certificate recognizing my right to use the land with my name on it. Administrative Office of Binh Duong province certified that. Although I did make all the necessary paper work to officialize my name in the document, the authorities did not approve it. I bought the house with the money I got from the compensation earned on my previous agricultural land located in district 2, and my personal loan from my two relatives. The Church only contributed 10% of the amount of purchase of the house

Question 2: Why you did not allow administrative inspection and insult government officials?

I was very concerned about the fact that the government used a huge number of individuals to come to my own house for administrative inspection, as it can cause

nuisance to my family & create tension that may turn into uncontrollable situation. Moreover, these individuals carried cameras and continuously filming the scene... In the past I always complied with the requested residency audit /inspection when only five to seven officials showed up. During these inspections, I accompanied them to go and check all the rooms of the house and nothing happened. Also, normally those who were sent to my house for auditing (inspecting) are local police, or security officers and local residents in the neighborhood. I did welcome them and in exchange they are nice and talkative as they only wanted to complete their assigned duty and go home.

As mentioned above, the unexpected occurrence in the night of 9 June 2014 when the police used large loudspeakers during the inspection of the residencies of Mrs. Dung and of Pastor Hoa, while those two were at a nearby day care (Pastor Hoa and his wife rent a room there) that belongs to Mr Giang. It has 4 large wooden doors and was on the left of the prayer house; it can be accessed via a private alley with front exit to D10 Street?

In my case, I am living in the prayer house with a long-term residency permit and I can get to my room through a door on the right. The irony is that the security force did not enter the targeted house, as announced through the loudspeakers, but they broke the lock of the entry door and force their way into the bedrooms where the pastors and students were sleeping.

On one hand they loudly announced the incoming “inspection” of one place while on the other, they forced the entry to inspect another place? This clearly showed that the security force acted in bad faith; and their intention is to intimidate, repress and tarnish the reputation of the Mennonite community. The following photo showed the protestant followers being stripped naked above the waist.

These people were beaten randomly that night... The acts of suppression were committed by a group of local government officials of My Phuoc. The victims (below) were arrested and being questioned at Public Security Office.



I think, it would be best for everybody if the authorities, upon receiving the notice of residency of Pastor Hoa, dispatched five to seven people to come, inspect and add the newcomers to the list of residencies on file; then the situation would be different ... In the past, on many occasions we were not handled any single register certificate while on another occasion they gave us 40 certificates, which were taken back by the authorities during a subsequent residency inspection. These certificates were not returned since! When we redid the registration, the authorities did not provide us the new ones, so how can they demand an audit when they already knew that we did not have anything on hand.

About Mr. Tri saying that I insulted him, I replied “when? The last two times, you did not show up, so please tell me whom I insulted?” He did record what I said on 9 of June; and that is true. I did it because I was simply too disturbed on that day. It is still fresh in my mind the scene of beating where students, pastors and teenagers were brutally swung by the mechanized police, unit 113 and other thugs right in a worship place. What could these worshippers do, if not only to pray peacefully and praise the Lord? For the public security agents and police, they didn’t care as they were ordered to use force to proceed against us, guns out of cases in a very menacing gesture. Why they beat and insulted innocent people right in a prayer house, in front of the podium in my presence? Why they ransacked my house, locked my head under the armpit and hit me repeatedly?

I did not either resist or incite others to resist but what I did was to shout loudly and strongly, which is purely an instinct of defense. I urged them to apply the rule of law when carrying out the residency audit or house inspection (if I ever insulted, it was against Lieutenant-Colonel Hoa and an unidentified individual accompanying him, when both of them aggressed me. Hoa is indeed the one who

led this brutal attack against us, an attack that is arbitrary and that does not conform to any law or principle. Please watch the video clip during which I insulted the police so that I can tell what I did and what I did not...)

Question 3: Why did you gather so many people? Do you know that gathering with more than two persons is illegal?

Gathering many people is illegal under your (security agents') subjective view, but it is not under my view. As citizens of Vietnam, we are granted the freedom of religion and the rights to worship. We are Christians and we believe in our God. This prayer house at D10 has been registered for 8 years as a place of worship and we practiced our religion, Protestant Mennonite Church. Everybody (government, people in the neighborhood, and public security agents) knew it well; but they did not want to acknowledge it, that's all.

What we did is appropriate and in compliance with the established international laws and conventions which the Vietnamese government has accepted, signed the agreement with the United Nations and committed to implement them. The gathering of believers you are talking about was a pure act of religious practice and did not have any intention of harming the Communist party and the government, or carry out any other mission.

The interrogation session ended with a short report which did not cover all the details and words expressed above (a Lieutenant of the public security office recorded the session on camera).

Once the report was completed, I did not sign yet and asked to have it printed in two copies in case the original will not be there in the future. After they printed and returned to me for signature but when I finished signing they took them away and I don't understand why? I did ask them and they apologized, saying they are not allowed to give me the report or its copy. Upon which I replied: "now I really understand you guys and it is a dire lesson for me to remember it for the whole life!!!" Did they act by their own or by following the directives of higher authority; and if there are two copies and one kept by me, how can they amend the report if needed?

IV. Other encounters with the authorities after the 9 June 2014 event:

-With the local public security agents of our housing block, when I asked them they responded "Oh uncle Quang, I only do what my boss tells me to do. Remember, I am only a low ranking official!"

-With the town of Ben Cat public security agents, one of them, high ranking and the two remainder, of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel rank: one face to face and the other via telephone. The two latter advised me to take it easy and take a rest, they are only desk-officers with the main task of reporting to higher authority; they showed respect and regards toward me.

While for the high ranking public security officer (of the town of Ben Cat), we had a couple of telephone conversations in which the subject is more of a

debatable nature. However, he appeared to be open-minded and willing to resolve the issue; therefore, I had the impression that he might not be responsible for the repression and humiliation of the Mennonite members on 9 June 2014.

Through VEF, I called a young high-ranking officer of Binh Duong provincial public security office, who had experience with religious issues such as our case. He has just been moved here (Binh Duong), and is very confident in his arguments that he laid down in the conversation: reasons are strong in terms of quantity and propaganda “What you did is against me, against the party, against the government! We will discipline you.” He mentioned and discussed the petition we sent in late 2013 to the party and the government and in which we wrote down the reasons why the prisoners of conscience must be released (this petition had the signatures of eight pastors and was approved by me. It was not posted on the web as it was classified as internal matters).

He denied the existence of prisoners of conscience and concluded that he did not agree with me as his and my way of thinking are divergent. He added that if I want that pastor Duong Kim Hai to be released soon, I should not have done this....He told me that he had reviewed the video clip dated 9 June 2014 and found the public security was right; only some mistakes here and there that can only be attributed to a couple of officers!!! He also rejected the idea of long time existence of the My Phuoc Mennonite Church branch; he said there is no religious issue here! There is no Church here! If you (Mr. Quang) want to sue, go ahead, even to international Court if you like. At that moment, he cut off the line. Afterward, I sent him this message “If you don’t respect human rights, I and all the others will hate you”. He sent back the message: “that’s your choice” ... I probably don’t share his one-way thinking, but I sympathize with him as in this current (Vietnamese) regime, he cannot find a way out.

- For some lower level public security officers, they said they were not aware of what happening. I thought that I should tell them. After I recounted the story, they exclaimed “Oh my gosh!!” and said they will dig into it but did not return to me since ... These guys are those who helped to ease the tension between Binh Duong Mennonite Church and the local authorities in the past, now they disappeared.

The Chuong Bo Mennonite branch has been moved close to Di An University campus in Binh Duong.

V. Remarks:

In reality, we did not commit any major faults in the temporary residency registering issue: in one case when we did not provide all the requested registered documents, we did apologize. It is very difficult if not impossible to get all papers on hand for the minority ethnic population in remote mountainous areas of the North and Highlands of Vietnam due to: (i)-the lack of understanding about personal papers of their parents and/or sponsors; (ii)-the procedure to get travelling document, especially for those engaged in religious activities. Their faults should also be blamed on government and us. Several children’s personal papers were seized by the government for a long period of time and not being

returned, as in the case of Ly Thi Sanh ID card. In another case, some of them went back and forth to public security office five times trying to get their paper work but it was in vain.

The local authorities came suddenly to inspect the prayer house with a huge and unnecessary force of intervention, which proves they were panicking about their own challenging situation and their own existence hence they acted incoherently in this case (9 June 2014).

Considering another case of government intervention, we must talk about the incident happened at Diamond company located in this area, on the eve of 13 to dawn of 14 May 2014. If the authorities used a force of only 1/5 time the one used against Mennonite prayer house, may be this firm would not end up with a total wipe-out as we saw today.

If they are still confident about their leadership in managing the country and acted as they did against our Mennonite Church, which has been quiet and peaceful for years in Binh Duong, there should be something wrong with them. Is it because of some big heads in the government went crazy and wanted to show their out-of-control disdain for the Mennonite community found almost 500 years ago? Although small, this Protestant branch had produced around 5000 martyrs in the protection of their religion and way-of-life.

The Mennonite philosophy is very clear: “if we are wrong, we will bear full responsibility in front of the justice; if the public security agents are wrong, they need to admit and correct it by publicizing their excuses to the community to whom they cause damages and abuses.” It should be noted that we are the faithful who are willing to forgive and forget to move forward! It seems that admitting their faults and apologizing for that is more difficult than flying to Mars planet!

The authorities always carry out a monologue in any discussions, but if they were open-minded in the verbal or meeting exchanges with the religious communities or other civil society organizations, maybe we can have peace for very long time. So why are they so interested in discussing human rights with the U.S, European countries and United Nations, in the meantime dismissed all positive discussions with the people inside Vietnam on the same subject? Probably why our Mennonite Protestant are still suffering discrimination and intolerance in many regions of the country.

Of course, the government has their own reasons to behave like that, but when it comes to the rights of its citizens and human rights, they become uneasy and avoid any discussions with their own people in public.

All what happens that day was so fast and only a few pictures were taken; some of us were able to record the pictures on flash drives, which later had been confiscated by public security agents, leaving us nothing as proof for future use. No electronic camera was installed inside the prayer house as we did not expect the authorities, which supposedly should respect religious freedom, would resort to such use of force on 9 or 12 of June 2014. Moreover, the goal of the Mennonite Church is not to deal with any threats but rather to keep peace and

harmony in religious activities, especially since it had been subject to attacks from the public security force, causing substantial damages in 2011 and previous years. Also, the Church community members did not retaliate in any circumstances although they were very discontent about the government maltreatment of them. Everything is in God's hands, did they say.

The Mennonite Church would not clandestinely negotiate an easy way out that would compromise its principle. Since returning to Binh Duong and encountering hurdles after hurdles, with the help of God I was able to focus and renew our faith. If we live in religious way and practice our religious principles, and when such a belief has been suppressed, then there will be no reason for me and for us not to sacrifice in defending the religious freedom and other basic human rights of our faithful Mennonites.

Presently the Mennonite dossier was handled by a multitude of persons, departments, power levels, approaches, timelines,... which adds to the complexity of the case : feelings, thoughts, guesses, subjective, inferring, unfounded proof, or based only on sparse facts here and there, periodic phenomena affecting Mennonite Protestant in conjunction with the movement for peace and those for social justice in a society overwhelmed with injustice, immorality and corruption of which the Mennonite Protestant Church in District 2 is a direct victim.

The Vietnamese public security office cannot easily get rid of their old traditional philosophy "better shooting somebody by mistake rather than missing anybody targeted!"

Those who live in the area of Nam-Ngai-Binh-Phu provinces in the center of Vietnam can tell you exactly how it comes about this inherited dictatorship, still encrusted in the head of those currently at the high hierarchy of power. Their assessment and decision on human rights and religious freedom issues are far from being a guarantee for those who seek them!

Concerning the event of 9 June 2014, it can be avoided if the responsible authorities made an effort to inquire and understand the difficulties of this small community of Mennonite in order to resolve peacefully any differences between them and us!

If there is a trust and understanding to be built between the leaders of a country and the population that they govern, so that they, the leaders and the governed, can live together in harmony; whether they are officials or regular citizens, directors or workers, ethnic minorities or overseas Vietnamese, it would help all of us building strength to confront any potential challenges or threats of extraordinary nature we may face in the future; otherwise we, as a Nation, will be at risk of being consumed totally if ever it happens, and we all loose!

Nowadays, it is obvious that nobody can, by himself, resolve issue of national level. Only the mentally sick, who does not respect human rights or religious freedom, dares to attack religions, monopolizes and promotes "reactionary" hats to sell anywhere he can. However, this has failed times after times, hence he

becomes angry and starts kicking at a sharp edge without realizing that he did it with bare feet!

Praying for a peace and justice for all

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