

# **VIETNAM: NOW! Campaign 2018 report about Vietnamese prisoners of conscience**

*Latest Count: Vietnam Holds 244 Prisoners of Conscience*

VietnamPoCS (03.01.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2LZCe4R> – Press release: According to the Now! Campaign, an initiative involving 14 international and Vietnamese civil society organizations, the government of Vietnam is holding at least 244 in prisons or similar forms of detention compared to 165 cases in November 2017, when the campaign was launched. This makes the country the second largest jailer of dissidents in Southeast Asia, only behind Myanmar.

The above number includes 224 who have been convicted, typically of political crimes such as “propaganda against the state” and “injuring the national unity,” and 20 others who are held in pre-trial detention. In addition, eight persons who participated in peaceful protests in mid-June of 2018 were given between five months and two years of suspended prison terms.

Many bloggers, lawyers, unionists, land rights activists, political dissidents, and followers of non-registered minority religions have been arrested and detained for peacefully exercising their internationally and constitutionally protected rights, principally the right to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of religion or belief. The list does not include individuals who

have engaged in or advocated violence.

In 2018, Vietnam arrested 27 human rights activists and convicted 40 activists with a total imprisonment of 300 years and 69 years under house arrest. In addition, 64 peaceful protesters were convicted in connection to the mass demonstrations that started in mid-June, where tens of thousands of protesters opposed the two bills on special economic zones and cyber security. The demonstrators were sentenced to a total of 121 years and five months in prison and nine years of suspended prison terms.

Thirty-two of the prisoners of conscience among the 244 identified by the NOW! Campaign are female. With one exception, all of these women come from the majority Kinh ethnic group. The one exception, Rmah Hruth, is an ethnic Jarai woman who was sentenced to five years of imprisonment in March 2014. In total, 186 people, or 76.6 % of the list, are ethnic Kinh. The second largest ethnic grouping on the list are Montagnards, a loose set of religious and ethnic minorities who live in the mountains of the Central Highlands. They account for 24.2% of those on the list. Seventeen of those on the list are Hmong people and two from Khmer Krom ethnic minority.

Most prisoners of conscience have been charged with or convicted of allegations under Articles 109, 116, 117, 318 and 331 in the 2015 Penal Code (previously Articles 79, 87, 88, 245 and 258 of the 1999 Penal Code, respectively):

– 45 activists convicted on subversion (Article 79 of 1999

Penal Code or Article 109 in the 2015 Penal Code);

– 23 activists convicted and five charged with anti-state propaganda (Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code or Article 117 of the 2015 Penal Code);

– 53 people from ethnic minorities convicted for undermining the national unity policy (Article 87 of the 1999 Penal Code);

– 13 activists convicted of or charged with “abusing democratic freedom” (Article 258 of the 1999 Penal Code or Article 331 of the 2015 Penal Code);

– 78 individuals convicted of or charged with “disrupting public orders” (under Article 245 of the 1999 Penal Code or Article 318 of the 2015 Penal Code). Fifty two of them were imprisoned for peaceful participation in or being suspected of planning to participate in the mid-June demonstrations and their aftermath.

– The charge(s) for 16 individuals are unknown or yet to be announced by authorities.

Note that 25 individuals in the Now! Campaign’s report dated October 1, 2018, are not listed in the year-end report due to the limited information on their cases.

## ***Background***

In order to maintain a one-party regime, Vietnam's communist government continues its intensified crackdown on local dissent by arresting and convicting many government critics, bloggers, Facebook users, non-violent demonstrators, environmentalists, and social activists.

To suppress the growing social dissatisfaction, silence activists and discourage critics, the government has used controversial articles in the national security provisions of the Penal Code to arrest democracy activists and human rights defenders and convict them with lengthy sentences. Democracy campaigner and environmentalist Le Dinh Luong (M) was sentenced to 20 years in prison and five years of probation, the most severe prison sentence given to an activist in the past five years.

The communist regime has employed harsh measures to prevent street demonstrations and used allegation of "disrupting public orders" under Article 318 of the 1999 Penal Code to imprison dozens of peaceful demonstrators.

### ***The largest wave of arrests in two decades***

In 2018, Vietnam arrested 26 activists and bloggers. Twenty-one of them were charged under provisions of the Penal Code while the charges against the remaining five have not been announced.

– University student Huynh Duc Thanh Binh (M) was charged with "attempting to overthrow the government" under Article 109 of

the 2015 Penal Code.

– Five activists were arrested and charged with “disrupting security” in early September: Hoang Thi Thu Vang (F) and four members of the unregistered Hien Phap (Constitution) Group: Ngo Van Dung (M), Nguyen Thi Ngoc Hanh (F), Doan Thi Hong (F) and Ho Dinh Cuong (M). Security forces kidnapped all of them on September 1-4 without informing their families about their arrests and places of detention. They are facing imprisonment of up to 15 years if convicted.

– Five activists were arrested and charged with “making, storing or spreading information, materials or items for the purpose of opposing the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” under Article 117: Nguyen Ngoc Anh (M), Nguyen Dinh Thanh (M), Huynh Truong Ca (M), Nguyen Trung Linh (M) and Nguyen Van Quang (M).

– Nine activists were arrested and charged with “abusing democratic freedom” under Article 331 of the Penal Code: Do Cong Duong (M), Le Anh Hung (M), Nguyen Van Truong (M), Doan Khanh Vinh Quang (M), Bui Manh Dong (M), Nguyen Hong Nguyen (M), Truong Dinh Khang (M), and Le Minh The (M). Five of them were convicted and sentenced to between one and five years in prison while four others are in pre-trial detention.

– Charge(s) against Huynh Duc Thinh (M), Tran Long Phi (M), Do The Hoa (M) and Tran Thanh Phuong (M) have not been publicized. Police have yet to hand over their arrest warrants to their families. All of these dissidents have been held incommunicado during the investigation period. They are not

permitted to meet with their lawyers, and their families are not allowed to visit them in person and must turn over to the prison authorities food, medicine and other personal necessities intended for the detainees.

In addition, Vietnam arrested hundreds of people participating in peaceful demonstrations in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Da Nang, Dong Nai, Nha Trang, Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan, Binh Duong, and other localities on June 10-11. These demonstrators protested the National Assembly's draft bills on special economic zones and on cyber security. The first bill is believed to ignore the country's sovereignty and favor Chinese investors while the second bill is considered a draconian tool to silence online critics.

For the UN review of Vietnam's implementation of the Convention Against Torture, held on November 14-15, 2018, BPSOS and five other civil organizations had submitted a joint report detailing the police's heavy-handed treatment and arrest of peaceful demonstrators in June 2018. Vietnam's security forces have used plainclothes agents to kidnap dissidents and hold them for months without publicizing charge(s) against them or informing their families about their arrest and the allegations made against them. At least ten activists were so taken into police custody in early September, and they are still held incommunicado for investigation on serious accusations including "disrupting security" under the national security provisions of the Penal Code. Among them are bloggers Nguyen Thi Ngoc Hanh (F), Tran Thanh Phuong (M), Hung Hung (M), Ngo Van Dung (M), Doan Thi Hong (F) and Do The Hoa (M) of the unregistered group Hien Phap (Constitution).

In its Concluding Observations following the review of Vietnam's implementation of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Geneva in mid November, the UN Committee Against Torture urges Vietnam to "[g]uarantee that all detained persons are afforded, in law and in practice, all fundamental legal safeguards from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty, including the right to be informed immediately of the charges against them, to have prompt access to a lawyer or to free legal aid during all proceedings, to notify a relative or another person of their choice about their detention or arrest, to request and receive a medical examination from an independent doctor, including by a doctor of their choice upon request, and to have their deprivation of liberty recorded in registers at all stages..."

Lengthy pretrial detention and failure to promptly bring detainee to court

In many cases, activists have been held for up to 28 months in pre-trial detention. For example, human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai (M) and his assistant Le Thu Ha (F) were in pre-trial detention from December 16, 2015 until their trial on April 5, 2018. During the pre-trial detention, activists are kept incommunicado and not permitted to meet with their lawyers or relatives. In most cases, they may have access to lawyers to prepare for their defense only a few days before being tried.

The case of blogger Nguyen Danh Dung (M) is of particular concern. On December 16, 2016, authorities in the central province of Thanh Hoa arrested him and charged him with "conducting anti-state propaganda" under Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code. There has been no information about him since

then. It is unclear whether he had been tried or freed or is still in pre-trial detention.

In its Concluding Observations, the UN Committee Against Torture has expressed concern about the lengthy pre-trial detention faced by human rights defenders and advised Vietnam to “[e]nsure that persons in administrative detention enjoy fundamental legal safeguards such as access to a lawyer or legal aid, the right to notify their family about their detention; and that their conditions of detention and treatment are not inferior to those of other persons deprived of their liberty.”

### ***Heavy sentences***

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### ***Heavy Sentences***

In 2018, Vietnam convicted 40 activists, 32 of them being arrested in 2015-2017 and eight in 2018.

– As many as 16 activists were convicted on subversion. They included eight members of the banned group Brotherhood for Democracy: Nguyen Van Dai (M), Nguyen Trung Ton (M), Nguyen Trung Truc (M), Pham Van Troi (M), Truong Minh Duc (M), Tran Thi Xuan (F), Nguyen Van Tuc (M), and Le Thu Ha (F); environmentalist and democracy advocate Le Dinh Luong (M), retired teacher Dao Quang Thuc (M) and five individuals alleged to be connected to the yet-to-be-established Coalition for Self-Determination for the Vietnamese People: Luu Van Vinh (M), Nguyen Quoc Hoan (M), Nguyen Van Duc Do (M), Tu Cong Nghia (M) and Phan Trung (M). They were given harsh sentences

of 7-20 years in prison and additional probation of 1-5 years.

– Seven activists were convicted on charge of “conducting anti-state propaganda” under Article 88 of the 1999 Penal Code or “making, storing or spreading information, materials or items for the purpose of opposing the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” under Article 117 of the 2015 Penal Code: Vu Quang Thuan (M), Nguyen Van Dien (M), Tran Hoang Phuc (M), Bui Hieu Vo (M), Nguyen Viet Dung(M), Huynh Truong Ca (M) and Nguyen Dinh Thanh (M). They were sentenced to between 4.5 years and 8 years in prison. The highest sentence was given to Mr. Thuan and the lightest imprisonment was given to Bui Hieu Vo, an online blogger in HCM City. Some of them were given additional four or five years of probation.

– Four activists were convicted on allegation of “abusing democratic freedom to infringe interests of the state” under Article 331 of the 2015 Penal Code: Truong Dinh Khang (M), Nguyen Hong Nguyen (M), Doan Khanh Vinh Quang (M) and Bui Manh Dong (M). They were sentenced to 1 year, 2 years, 27 months and 30 months in prison, respectively.

– Do Cong Duong (M), an anti-corruption activist and independent journalist in Bac Ninh province, was arrested while filming an enforced land grabbing in February 2018. Later, he was convicted on allegations of “abusing democratic freedom” and “disrupting public orders” under Articles 331 and 318 of the 2015 Penal Code. He was sentenced in separate trials to 5 years in prison for the first charge and 4 years in prison for the second charge.

– Nine activists and 64 peaceful protesters in mid-June were convicted for “disrupting public orders” and sentenced to between 8 months and 6 years in prison.

### ***Mistreatment in prison***

In July – August imprisoned human rights activists Tran Thi Nga (F) and Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (aka blogger Mother Mushroom) (F) were reportedly mistreated in prison. Ms. Nga was beaten and given death threats by an inmate. On September 29, Nga was denied of her family’s visit. The last time she met with her family was July 26. Her family is concerned about her safety. Ms. Quynh was also threatened by an inmate and was given poor-quality food. She conducted a 17-days hunger strike that lasted from July 7 to July 23 in a bid to protest the prison’s inhumane treatment.

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (M), who is serving his 16-year imprisonment at Prison Camp No. 6 in the central province of Nghe An, started a hunger strike on August 14 to protest the bad treatment by prison authorities, which aimed to coerce him to make false confessions. The hunger strike lasted till September 16.

On August 16, 2018, appearing as witnesses at the hearing of Le Dinh Luong (M), Nguyen Van Hoa (M) and Nguyen Viet Dung (M) informed the presiding judge that their written confessions against Luong had been obtained through torture. They were both taken to another room where Hoa was beaten again by a senior police officer from the Nghe An province’s Police Department.

The Ministry of Public Security apparently transfers prisoners of conscience to prison camps far from their families as additional punishment for those who refused to admit wrongdoings. For example, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, and Tran Thi Nga were sent to prisons located between 1,000 km and 2,000 km from their families. Other documented cases are included in the following table.

No.	Name	Charge	Place of detention	Home location	Distance (km)	Period
1	Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (f)	88	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Nha Trang	1,300	2017-2018
2	Tran Thi Nga (f)	88	Prison camp Dak Trung- Gia Lai	Hanoi	1,250	Currently
3	Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (m)	79	Prison camp No. 6- Nghe An	HCM City	1,400	Currently
4	Tran Anh Kim (m)	79	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Thai Binh	150	Currently
5	Nguyen Dang Minh Man (f)	79	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Vinh Long	1,600	Currently
6	Nguyen Van Oai (m)	88	Prison camp Dak Trung- Gia Lai	Nghe An	1,300	Currently
7	Ngo Hao (m)	79	An Diem Prison camp- Quang Nam	Phu Yen	500	Currently
8	Bui Thi Minh Hang (f)	245	Prison camp Dak Trung- Gia Lai	Vung Tau	1,000	2015-2017
9	Mai Thi Dung (f)	79	Thanh Xuan Prison camp- Hanoi	Dong Thap	2,000	2013-2015
10	Can Thi Theu (f)	245	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Hanoi	300	2016-2017
11	Ho Duc Hoa (m)	79	Ba Sao Prison camp- Ha Nam	Nghe An	300	Currently
12	Le Thanh Tung (m)	79	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Hanoi	210	Currently
13	Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung (m)	89	Xuyen Moc Prison camp- Ba Ria- Vung Tau	HCM City	100	Currently
14	Nguyen Huu Vinh (m)	258	Prison camp No. 5- Thanh Hoa	Hanoi	300	Currently
15	Nguyen Van Hoa	88	An Diem Prison camp- Quang Nam	Ha Tinh	500	Currently
16	Phan Kim Khanh	88	Ba Sao Prison camp- Ha Nam	Phu Tho	300	Currently
17	Phan Van Thu	79	An Phuoc Prison camp, Binh Duong	Phu Yen	500	Currently
18	Tran Thi Thuy	79	An Phuoc Prison camp, Binh Duong	Ben Tre	150	2013-2017
19	Le Dinh Luong	79	Ba Sao Prison camp- Ha Nam	Nghe An	300	Currently

***Release from prison***

Ten activists were released from prison this year. Nguyen Huu Quoc Duy (M), Dinh Nguyen Kha (M), Tran Thi Thuy (F), Giang A Vang (M), and Vang A Long (M) completed their sentence. The first three are still placed under probation – they are under the close surveillance of local authorities during the probation period. After years in prison, their health has worsened; diagnosed with a number of severe diseases, they need urgent medical treatment to partly recover their health.

On the other hand, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (F), Le Thu Ha (F) and Nguyen Van Dai (M) were given amnesty but forced to leave Vietnam to live in exile. On June 7, Mr. Dai, accompanied by his wife, and Ms. Ha left for Germany. On October 17, Ms. Quynh was accompanied by her two children and her mother to the United States.

### ***International responses***

Vietnam's persecution against dissidents was met by strong international condemnation, particularly by the United States, the European Union, Germany, and the United Kingdom as well as by international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Along with calling on Hanoi to release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally, the international community has urged Vietnam to respect international human rights treaties of which Vietnam is a state-party. The international community has also called on Vietnam to amend

its Cyber Security Law, which in its current form would further restrict freedom of expression.

In its Concluding Observations dated December 28, 2018, the UN Committee Against Torture called on Vietnam to immediately cease all acts of torture and other forms of ill-treatment targeting persons deprived of their liberty, especially prisoners of conscience.

The term “prisoner of conscience” (POC) was coined by Peter Benenson in the 1960s. It refers to any individual “imprisoned for his/her political, religious or conscientiously held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, sexual orientation or other status who have not used violence or advocated violence or hatred.”

The NOW! Campaign is a joint campaign initiated by Boat People SOS (BPSOS) calling upon the government of Vietnam to release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally. The campaign is supported by 14 non-government organizations:

Boat People SOS (BPSOS)  
Front Line Defenders (FLD)  
Civil Right Defenders (CRD)  
Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)  
Defend the Defenders (DTD)  
Stefanus Alliance International  
Asian Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)  
The 88 Project  
Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam (IJAVN)

Progressive Voice-Burma  
Vietnam Women for Human Rights (VNWHR)  
Campaign to Abolish Torture in Vietnam (VN-CAT)  
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)  
Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHR0)

For more information on the NOW! Campaign, visit  
[www.vietnampocs.com](http://www.vietnampocs.com).

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List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

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**WORLD :      US      condemns      10**

# **countries for severe religious freedom violations**

By Jennifer Hansler

CNN (11.12.2018) – <https://cnn.it/2Erh0kr> – Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday announced the US has deemed 10 countries guilty of severe religious freedom violations.

The nations – China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar (also known as Burma), North Korea, Pakistan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – were categorized “Countries of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. They were found to have engaged or tolerated “systematic, ongoing, (and) egregious violations of religious freedom.”

“In far too many places across the globe, individuals continue to face harassment, arrests, or even death for simply living their lives in accordance with their beliefs. The United States will not stand by as spectators in the face of such oppression,” Pompeo said in a statement. “Protecting and promoting international religious freedom is a top foreign policy priority of the Trump Administration.”

“These designations are aimed at improving the lives of individuals and the broader success of their societies. I recognize that several designated countries are working to improve their respect for religious freedom; I welcome such initiatives and look forward to continuing the dialogue,” he



added.

Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, in a call with reporters on Tuesday, cited a catalog of religious freedom violations perpetrated by some of these nations. They included Pakistan's blasphemy laws, specifically the case of Asia Bibi, Myanmar's mass violence against the Rohingya population and China's imprisonment of the Uyghurs and its treatment of Christians and Buddhists.

"China isn't backing away from the religious persecution, it seems to be expanding," he said. "This is obviously very troubling to the administration."

According to the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, such "egregious violations" include "torture, degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, abduction or clandestine detention, or other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons."

Congress is notified of the designations annually, and sanctions to pressure the country to change its behavior may be imposed if all non-economic means have been used.

According to Brownback, such sanctions are "double-hatted" – meaning the countries are sanctioned in other areas but also considered sanctioned as Countries of Particular Concern. China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea and Sudan are all being sanctioned as such, but Saudi Arabia, Pakistan,

Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have had their sanctions waived due to "national interest," Brownback said.

In addition to the Countries of Particular Concern designation, Pompeo "placed Comoros, Russia, and Uzbekistan on a Special Watch List for governments that have engaged in or tolerated 'severe violations of religious freedom,' " and designated al Nusra Front, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Houthis, ISIS, ISIS-Khorasan and the Taliban as "Entities of Particular Concern," according to the statement.

Pompeo made the designations in late November.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent, bipartisan federal government commission established by the 1998 law, said the designation "demonstrates America's strong and active support for freedom of religion and belief worldwide."

"We are particularly gratified that, after years of documenting systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom in Pakistan, the State Department has finally added that country to the list of the world's worst violators for the first time," Chairman Tenzin Dorjee said in a statement to CNN. "We also welcome the new addition of Russia as a severe violator on the Special Watch List, but question whether Uzbekistan has sufficiently improved to be moved from the CPC list to the Special Watch List. In April 2018 USCIRF recommended that both of those countries should be designated as CPCs."

Brownback said Uzbekistan had made “substantial changes.”

In December 2017, Pompeo designated China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as Countries of Particular Concern and placed Pakistan on the Special Watch List for severe violations of religious freedom.

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**CHINA: 100 church attendees**

# in custody, attacks ongoing

ChinaAid (10.12.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2C5rXRc> – Around 100 leaders and seminary students from Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, Sichuan have been arrested today.

Among the arrested are Pastor Wang Yi and his wife, Jiang Rong, who were seen being taken away after those who attend their church could not find them. Another two, Guo Hai and his wife, were forced to leave their two children at home unattended when police took them into custody.

Others had their homes raided. One church elder, Qin Defu, was forced to the ground as police inspected his residence.

The situation began at 6:00 p.m. China Standard Time (hereafter referred to as CST) when police seized a Christian at the entrance of the church and a multitude of officers searched his place.

Additionally, authorities shut off power to the home of church members Song Enguang and his wife. The police stationed downstairs also took three Christians, who attempted to visit them during the ordeal.

As this happened, officials stationed many vehicles outside the entrance to the church and broke in.

The officers carrying out the arrests reportedly exhibited rude behavior. When the Christians asked why they were being taken away without warrants, one of them replied, "We are enforcing laws. Our process is to summon litigants and require them to cooperate with the investigation. you all should follow our process ... What else am I supposed to tell you? You are not supposed to know some details, so you can never know. It is us rather than you who enforce laws."

An incomplete list of those arrested includes: Jiang Ruolin, Ge Yingfeng, Zhu Hong, Xiao Hongliu, Ye Yin, Zhang Jianqing, Liu Yingxiu, Assistant Deacon Zhang Guoqing, Elder Su and his wife, Xiao Yingshan and his spouse, Song Engquang and his spouse, Xiao Baoguang, Zhou Xiaojuan, Liu Daxuan, and Zhou Yong.

The arrests continued into Dec. 11, when Li Yingqiang, who went into hiding and became the one contact available to speak to the press, was arrested. A prayer letter released by the church states that at least three Christians who have been freed were raped by the police.

"The massive overnight attack against members of the independent, renowned Early Rain Covenant Church represents a major escalation of religious persecution in China," said Dr. Bob Fu, ChinaAid's founder and president and a close friend of Pastor Wang. "Ironically this largest scale of arrests and clamp down on the international Human Rights Day shows Xi's regime deliberately making itself the enemy of universal values, such as religious freedom for all. ChinaAid calls upon the international community to condemn these arbitrary arrests of innocent religious believers and urges the Chinese regime for their immediate release."

The church's official translation of one of their prayer letters has been included below.

ChinaAid exposes abuses, such as those suffered by the attendees of Early Rain Covenant Church, in order to stand in solidarity with the persecuted and promote religious freedom, human rights, and rule of law.

### ***Emergency prayer information 07: Autumn Rain St York Church***

Three brothers and sisters who have been released told us that they were raped by police at the police station today and even stepped on their feet. One of the brothers was tied to his hands and feet at a late night and was detained all day, and the leg was tortured in multiple ways, and the body was injured with multiple injuries. These evils are heinous.

A brother said the police didn't give him a sip of rice in 24 hours, didn't drink a sip, was deprived of rest time and was tied to the chair all night for only two or three hours.

At around, the police asked the fire officers to break the door and enter the female hostel of the church humanities academy to take two of them. The Church, a sermon in da state, was inspected by the police at nine o'clock at pm and was taken by the same worker.

At around pm, there was a brother who saw more than young lad wearing a license in a car near the church into the church building. We estimate that these people are prepared and will damage, damage the renovation and equipment of church and church schools.

The night is deep, but there are still many brothers and sisters who are missing, we don't know where to look for these taken siblings, parents are looking for children, wife is looking for husband, brother is looking for sister.....

O Lord, look at the grievances of your children, and this country trample on the dignity of your children, but these children are the pupils of your eyes. You will have to heal these scars with your loving hands and let us learn from the suffering and learn the patience of Christ. Lord, may you come soon!

Autumn Rain St York church

Issued on 10 December 2018, 24:00 slightly revised.

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## **Six more Baha'is sentenced to prison in Iran**

Radio Farda (22.11.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2jeRjBA> – Six Iranian citizens accused of acting against national security for following the Baha'i faith have been sentenced to a combined total of 18 years' imprisonment, a representative of the Baha'i International Community (BIC) told Radio Farda.

All six Baha'is, residents of the impoverished Sistan and Baluchestan Province in southeastern Iran, were tried at a Revolutionary Court in Zahedan, the capital of the province.

In Iran, Baha'is have long been victim to systematic discrimination and persecution for their faith.

"We cannot yet confirm the reports, but we know that three of these Baha'is – Houshang Mokhtari, Bijan Eslami, and Ali Anvari – were detained three or four months ago and later released on bail. Now, sadly, we have heard they have all been sentenced to prison," BIC spokesman Padiedah Sabeti told Radio Farda.

Sabeti, based in London, said pressure on Baha'is in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, Kerman, Kermanshah, and Hormozgan has intensified in recent months.



“Last month in Kerman, nine Baha’is were detained but released after being subjected to persecution. Based on social media reports, many of the detainees’ properties were confiscated,” she said.

Along with those suspected of opposing the ruling system in Iran, Bahai’is are often charged with actions against national security.

“The term is quite vague,” Sabeti said. “Many international institutions defending human rights have repeatedly asked [Iran] to deliver a clear definition of the term. Nevertheless, they have received no response.”

The trial of the six Baha’is was held some time ago, and their sentences were issued on the basis of a summons handed down on November 16 by the Zahedan court. Each was sentenced to three years, according to the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA).

The group categorically rejected the charges of acting against national security, saying they are simply citizens persecuted for their religious beliefs.

According to HRANA, the convicted Baha’is plan to appeal their sentences within the next 20 days.

Meanwhile, many Baha’i businesses have been sealed off by Iranian security officers.

The action was in apparent reprisal for owners closing their businesses in observance of the recent Baha’i holidays celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Baha’u’llah (the prophet of the Baha’i faith), which is of particular importance to the worldwide Baha’i community.

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## **INDIA: India Arrests Christians for Taking Kids to Bible Camp**

The Christian Post (30.05.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2saHbki> – Government authorities in India have arrested as many as 11 people for transporting dozens of Christian children to a Bible camp this month in the predominantly-Hindu Madhya Pradesh state, and have charged them with kidnapping and attempting to convert Hindu children.

The New Indian Express reports that chaperones associated with a Bible camp in Nagpur were arrested earlier this month while transporting at least 71 children to the camp in two separate incidents on May 21 and May 22.

On May 21, the Railway Protection Force and Government Railway Police stopped the group of 60 children between the ages of 13 and 15 who were traveling with nine chaperones at a train station in Ratlam.

After the chaperones told authorities that they were taking

the children to the summer camp in Nagpur, the authorities checked to make sure that there was a summer camp in Nagpur. However, the authorities learned that there was only a Bible camp happening from May 22–25.

According to a police official, chaperones Vijay Meda, Nitin Mandor, Lalu Bhamore, Pangu Singh Vasuniya, Akash Jodiya, Sharmilla Damor, Savita Bhuria and Amia Pal were then arrested and charged last Tuesday. The suspects have been placed in judicial custody.

The New Indian Express reports that parents of the children who were detained on May 21 have rejected the idea that the chaperones were trying to convert their children because they, too, are already Christians.

Yet, the government maintains that the chaperones are still guilty of violating the Madhya Pradesh Religious Freedom Act because the children's parents did not follow the proper procedure of changing their official religion to Christianity, thus making their children Hindu under law.

The children have since been returned to their parents.

“For changing to another religion, one needs to submit a written application to the district collector and only after the stipulated process, a person can change religious identity, which didn't happen in the case of any of the parents claiming to be Christians,” police superintendent Krishnaveni Desavatu told The New Indian Express. “This is why, the children and their parents will be officially treated as Hindu tribals and not Christians.”

The Catholic media outlet Crux reports that poor and lower-caste residents who try to convert to smaller denominations often face obstacles when trying to follow the government's conversion procedure.

On May 22, two other men affiliated with the Bible camp –

Alkesh and Harun Dabar – were arrested in Indore while transporting 11 other children aged between 11 and 17 to that same Bible camp.

“The Indore and Ratlam cases, which are related, have prima facie established an organised attempt by the Gujarat-based organisation to convert the tribal children from Madhya Pradesh to Christianity at the special prayers camp whose caretaker, Vincent Patil, too has been grilled by our team in Nagpur,” Desavatu said.

According to Open Doors USA, India is one of the worst places for Christians to live, as it ranks on the [2017 World Watch List](#) as the 15th worst country in the world when it comes to the persecution of Christians.

According to Crux, Christians in India suffer from various forms of harassment and violence that is driven by accusations from Hindu nationalists that Christians are using questionable tactics to convert Hindus, who make up over 90 percent of the Madhya Pradesh state.

“The traumatization of these tribal and Dalit children from the villages of western Madhya Pradesh is symptomatic of the paranoia and targeted hate that is currently sweeping across north India,” John Dayal, spokesperson for the United Christian Forum and a former president of the All India Catholic Union, told Crux. “No laws were broken by anyone in this instance, as indeed in incidents of anti-Christian violence in recent weeks.”

“These are Christian children going to a summer camp in Nagpur. The involvement of the police and local civil authorities needs closer study,” Dayal added. “Apart from rampant impunity and turning a blind eye to [Hindu nationalist] violence, the law and order institutions have been heavily infiltrated and radicalized under almost 15 years of Bharatiya Janata Party rule in Madhya Pradesh.”

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