

VIETNAM: Jailed Vietnamese pastor punished after US visit

Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh confined after describing harsh prison treatment to American officials

UCANews (13.06.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2sso9Ww> – An evangelical pastor imprisoned in southeast Vietnam is being held in a cramped confined space as punishment for telling a visiting U.S. diplomatic delegation about abuses he has suffered.

Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh gave officials from the U.S. Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City details on May 25 on how officials have treated him at Xuan Loc Prison, Dong Nai Province, said his wife Tran Thi Hong.

“Chinh said on the previous day, prison officials informed him about the meeting and asked him not to tell the visitors anything that would make them look bad,” said Hong who visited her husband June 7.

“Chinh could not obey their order,” she said. “He told the delegation his experiences of torture, threats and mistreatment that he has endured over six years.” The pastor has been kept in three prisons since being arrested in 2011.

He told the U.S. consulate staff that prison officials have put shards of glass into his food, subjected him to corporal punishment such as beatings and being put in stocks, have humiliated him and put him in solitary confinement, she said.

The pastor has been subjected to these types of abuses because he refuses to do what prison officials require, she said.

Immediately after the U.S. delegation left the prison, Chinh was confined in the cramped space and isolated from other inmates, said his wife.

"I am very concerned about his poor health in solitary confinement because he is suffering severe sinusitis and high blood pressure," she said.

Hong, mother of four, was herself tortured, beaten and questioned at a police station for two months after she met with a U.S. delegation on religious freedom in March 2016 in Pleiku city.

Chinh was sentenced to 11 years in 2011 for providing religious activities to ethnic groups in the Central Highlands.

Vietnam has 83 prisoners of religious freedom behind bars, reported BPSOS, a U.S.-based NGO on June 6.

Watch Jackie Wolcott from the U.S. Commission of International Religious Freedom speak out on behalf of Chinh and Hong in the USCIRF09 video here.

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