

VIETNAM: Govt seizes Benedictine land in Vietnam

Property theft follows desecration of cross and statue of Jesus

UCA NEWS (10.07.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2uHuYS1> – The Vietnamese government has stolen land owned by the Benedictine order in central Vietnam says the head of the country's bishops.

“Government authorities have stolen Benedictine land and sold it to local and foreign enterprises because they want to attract investment from enterprises,” Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh, head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam told Eglises D'Asie on Jul. 3, while he was in France.

The government has seized most of 107 hectares of farm land and pine forest but left six hectares for Thien An Monastery itself.

Archbishop Linh, 67, accused authorities of “mocking Benedictines' rights and religious organizations' rights as well.”

The monks have had legal ownership of the monastery in central Thua Thien Hue Province since 1940.

The alleged theft of land was not an isolated incident.

On June 28-29, police were among a crowd of some 200 people – some armed with knives, iron rods and batons – who broke into the monastery. Witnesses says that the mob attacked the Benedictines and desecrated a cross and a statue of Jesus.

Six Benedictines were badly injured, including one who was beaten to unconsciousness. Police prevented him from being hospitalized.

Sources say the attacks were due to a long-time land dispute between the government and the monks over pine forests on the Benedictine's land.

Archbishop Linh, who became archbishop of Hue Archdiocese last October, said Catholics – who recall massacres perpetrated by northern communists in 1968 – don't dare speak up for the Benedictines.

The church official, who visited the monastery on June 16, said Benedictine monks asked the Archbishop's House to support their efforts to reclaim their properties.

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