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World Watch Monitor (21.01.2015) - The case against Bhutanese Pastor Tandin Wangyal, originally detained in March 2014 for holding a religious meeting without permission, has been dropped and he is free after paying a fine on Jan. 19.

A source close to Wangyal, who cannot be named for security, said to World Watch Monitor, "He's paid the fine; and is free now. There's no case against him."

The sessions court initially sentenced Wangyal for more than four years in prison, but reduced the term to two years, four months – a sentence that the court said could be waived in exchange for a fine of 100,000 Ngultrum, or about US \$1,600.

Wangyal was arrested in March 2014 with another Bhutanese pastor, Mon Thapa, who was released in September from his prison sentence of 2 years and 4 months, after paying a fine of 98,800 Ngultrum.

The men were arrested while they were carrying a sick child to a clinic in a village. They had arrived in the village the previous day, in response to an invitation to hold a three-day seminar for 30 Christians who came from neighboring towns.

They were charged with conducting a gathering for religious purpose without prior approval; showing a film without certificate of approval from media authorities; and for collecting "illegal funds."
