

**MONTAGNARD FOUNDATION WARNS OF INCREASED CRACKDOWN  
OF MONTAGNARD CHRISTIANS AND APPEALS FOR US RELIGIOUS  
AMBASSADOR TO VISIT AREAS WHERE INCIDENTS OF SHOOTINGS,  
ARRESTS AND TORTURE ARE REPORTED**

**PRESS RELEASE AND REPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR  
OCTOBER/SEPTEMBER 2003**

As US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom – Mr. John Hanford visits Vietnam from 18 - 24 October 2003 the Montagnard Foundation has received reports direct from the central highlands reporting the increased mobilization of soldiers repressing Montagnard (Degar) Christians prior to the Ambassador's visit. This crackdown involves Army Division 198 that is currently sweeping the villages of Boun Cuoi, Krang, Braing, Knul and Blang in Dak Lak province looking for Christians and fleeing refugees. In the village of Buon Kdun, Buonmathuot there is also one division conducting sweeping operations that involve shootings, beatings, arrests, disappearances, electric shock torture of Montagnard Christians and beatings of women whose husbands are refugees living in the United States. It was only in May 2003 that the US International Commission For Religious Freedom had stated, "*the increased repression of religious freedom has been reportedly sanctioned at the highest levels of the Vietnamese government.*" The US State Department, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Transnational Radical Party and numerous non-governmental organizations have all recently confirmed such human rights violations directed against hill tribe Montagnards, many of whom are Christians.

The situation facing the Montagnard population inside Vietnam has reached a crisis point in what appears a sophisticated form of ethnic cleansing by the Vietnamese authorities who view Christianity and freedom of expression as a threat. Examples of persecution include the following.

**Shooting of fleeing Christian on October 16, 2003, at around 12:00 noon**, the Cong An police and soldiers went into the village of Buon Cuor Knia, district of Buon Don, province of Daklak, and opened fire at our Christian brother Y-Hoang Buon Krong with an automatic rifle AK 47. He got wounded with four bullets and is now hospitalized at Buonmathuot Hospital. It is unknown whether he is alive or dead at the present time.

**Shooting of fleeing Christian on October 10, at around 2 PM**, a group of 12 police from the district of Krong Ana, province of Daklak, opened fire at Y-Pho Eban in his house and in front of his wife and children with automatic AK 47 rifle because he has been running from arrest. His wife and children cried out to neighbors for help but the police tied his pregnant wife to a house pole, beat her and stuffed a cloth in her mouth. Y-Phon Eban was wounded with three bullets in his abdomen and he is now hospitalized at Buonmathuot Hospital. Before the police shot him the Vietnamese government had sent 2 battalions of soldiers (excluding the Cong An police) to surround his village (Buon Cuoi village, district of Krong Ana, province of Daklak).

**Beatings and electric shock torture on October 10, 2003 at around 11 AM**, six Degars named Y-Nel Eban 17 year old, Y-Goai Knul 17 year old, Y-Duk Eban 41 year old, Y-Nang Hmok 35 year old, H'Wem Buon Ya 41 year old and Y-Yang Buon Ya 18 year old, from Buon Cuoi, district of Krong Ana, province of Daklak, who went to the village of Buon Ea Khit for the funeral of a relative. After the funeral, the six villagers returned home to their village of Buon Cuoi. But, on their way home, they passed through a Vietnamese village name Kim Chau for a shortcut. The Vietnamese police with truck plate number 20494-

47C, arrested and tortured them by beatings, kicking, electric shock and took them to a unknown location. The reason of arrest was because of passing through a Vietnamese village.

**Arrest and harassment on October 2003**, a young student Y Phor Mlo (born 1984) from Bon Don District, while attending a computer class in Ea Bar commune, was arrested by three Vietnamese police officers Phan Huu Nhac, Nguyen Thanh That, and Nguyen Van Phuc at around 8:30 in the morning. The officers were angry and started yelling at him because he had previously visited his sister H'Pun Mlo who had been in jail (see below). The police arrested him and confiscated his motorcycle. His parents went to visit him but were prohibited by the police officers. The charge for the arrest was because he wanted to visit his sister in jail. He is now imprisoned at the prison facility in Buon Don District but has been planned to be moved to another location.

**Arrest of Montagnard women by Police Lt Colonel Phan Huu Nhac, Major Thanh That and Major Nguyen Van Phuc because her husband is a refugee in the United States**

On October 13, 2003 three Officers Lt. Col. Phan Huu Nhac, Major Nguyen Thanh That and Major Nguyen Van Phuc, arrested H'Pun Mlo and took her to the prison in Buonmathuot, province of Daklak where she still remains. She had been arrested and interrogated numerous times previously including from September 3, 2003 to September 11, 2003. H'Pun Mlo is from the village of Buon Cuor Knia, Buon Don District. There were some foreigners who were planning to meet with H'Pun Mlo on October 8, 2003 between 4 and 5 o'clock in the evening at Buon Cuor Knia but the villagers did not dare take them to see her because the police officers, Lt. Col. Phan Huu Nhac, Major Nguyen Thanh That and Major Nguyen Van Phuc, were in the village. H'Pun Mlo has two children -Y-Toni Mlo is 7 year old and H'Bon Mlo is 4 year old and there is no one now caring for her children. The Vietnamese government is doing this to her to punish her because she is a Christian and her husband is a refugee who is now living in the US.

**Cong An police use chemical sprays: 29 September 2003 around 7:00 am.**

Poverty stricken and without land to farm, four Degar Christian men had to find work at a nearby rubber plantation to bring food to their table. After they had been hired to work for the plantation for two days, they asked the owner to pay them for their work so that they could buy food for their family, but the owner of the plantation refused to pay them. With sadness and hopelessness, the men returned to their village without doing or saying anything to the owner of the plantation. On their return home, the men were followed by Vietnamese Cong An officers (police) and other employees of the plantation. The pack following the men on their way home carried with them a poisonous chemical compound. As soon as they got to their village, the Vietnamese officers and the employees of the plantation sprayed them in their eyes and on their bodies. They became paralyzed and blinded because the spray was toxic. The fathers of the victims saw what was happening and ran over to help. They tried to carry their sons to the hospital, but they too became blind and paralyzed even though they were not directly sprayed, but only inhaled the fumes. When the villagers saw what was happening, they were confused, frightened and upset and walked to the rubber plantation to complain, but they too became victims because the employees of the plantation sprayed this same toxic chemical compound on their eyes and bodies as well.

All of the victims were reported in critical condition and they were admitted to hospital for treatment. They were all from Plei Ba Tih village, Adok commune, Dak Doa District, Gia Lai province and the names of the first four victims are:

1. Hlum, born 1980.
2. Than, born 1981.
3. Dun, born 1984.
4. Nuc, born 1981.

The twenty two villagers also from Plei Bia tih, who went to the commune office and the rubber plantation to try to find out why their friends were sprayed with a deadly chemical, were also brought to the hospital for treatment. Their names are:

- |                    |                      |                     |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Ngum, born 1984 | 9. Byum, born 1981   | 17. Khom, born 1985 |
| 2. Byu, born 1984  | 10. Yum, born 1981   | 18. Hop, born 1984  |
| 3. Nglu, born 1987 | 11. Lum, born 1977   | 19. Grum, born 1987 |
| 4. Khun, born 1984 | 12. Amu, born 1987   | 20. Grin, born 1978 |
| 5. Wung, born 1983 | 13. Phum, born 1987  | 21. Grac, born 1980 |
| 6. Wan, born 1987  | 14. Tung, born 1986  | 22. Wu, born 1986   |
| 7. Tan, born 1984  | 15. Byung, born 1983 |                     |
| 8. Tui, born 1986  | 16. Khin, born 1986  |                     |

The five men who participated in the assault against the 22 Degar villagers and the four Degar workers are as listed below:

1. Hung, police officer of Dak Doa district {Vietnamese}
2. Tho, employee of the rubber plantation {Vietnamese}
3. Long, guard who protects the rubber plantation (Vietnamese)}
4. Byui, chief of the Adok commune {Degar}
5. Thin, guard who protect the rubber plantation {Vietnamese}

#### **Threats and theft.**

On September 17, 2003 Hung, a commune policeman (Vietnamese), Din a commune policeman (Degar), Mui a commune undercover policeman (Degar), Loi commune secretary (Degar), and Khuuc a chairman of Adok commune. These men went to search the house of the families of Degar Montagnards named Bum, Angli and Anglok, who have been hiding in the jungles fearing arrest and torture of the Vietnamese government police, at the village of Plei Djrung, commune of Adok, district of Dak Doa, Gia Lai province. The police could not find any information or documents in order to accuse their families nevertheless, they stole six cows that belonged to Bum's wife and brought the cows back with them to their commune. They told Bum's wife *"Tell your husband to come back and if your husband doesn't come back home and present himself to the authorities, we will surely keep these 6 cows."*

#### **Beatings and Electric shock torture: On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at around 10:00 am**

Vietnamese police, in two jeeps from Mang Yang district arrested and tortured 8 Degar Christians during a prayer meeting at Oai's house in the village of Bong Mor, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai. All eight church members who were at the prayer meeting were arrested and taken to the government office at the district of Mang Yang. The names of the eight congregation members are listed below:

1. Oai, who was born in 1962 from the village of Plei Bong Mor, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
2. Pral, who was born in 1957 from the village of Plei De Kop, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
3. Pet, who was born in 1960 from the village of Plei Bong Hiot, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
4. Djip, who was born in 1963 from the village of Plei Bong Hiot, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
5. Ruk, who was born in 1958 from the village of Plei Kon Brung, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.

6. Dun, who was born in 1962 from the village of Plei Kon Brung, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
7. Jak, who was born in 1959 from the village of Plei Kon Brung, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.
8. H’Nip, who was born in 1964 from the village of Plei Kon Brung, commune of Ayun, district of Mang Yang, province of Gia Lai.

The 8 church members above were beaten along the journey to the jail house. The owner of the house where the prayer meeting took place was severely beaten and battered. He became unconscious, and every time he would try to get back up to walk another strike brought him to the floor until he finally fell into a “deep sleep”. The other Christians were kicked, struck and shocked into unconsciousness by electric batons. They were finally released on 17 September 2003 and are still suffering pain from their beatings and some are immobile, unable to walk or work.

**Beatings: On September 11, 2003, at around 4:00 pm**

Two Vietnamese cong an (police) from the district of Dak Doa, Doan Van Tuan and Hung, went to the village of Plei Krec, Commune K’Dang, district of Dak Doa, province of Gia Lai went to arrest three Degar Christians:

1. Yak, who was born in 1962
2. Pom, who was born in 1975
3. Kren, who was born in 1968

They took them to their office in the district of Dak Doa and imprisoned them there. Here, they beat and kicked them until they were unconscious because their Christian beliefs. After 2 days of torture, the police took them back to their village but they couldn’t stand up or walk because of the pain from the beatings. So, the villagers from the Krec village got together and went to protest at the K’Dang Commune. Because of this protest, the officials at the commune took the 3 persons who were hurt and treated them at the commune health center.

**Arrests and Disappearances:**

- ❑ On September the 13<sup>th</sup> of 2003, at around 8:00 am, the Vietnamese police from Cu Se district abducted our Christian Brother, Rmah Kuet, who was born in 1954 from the village of Plei Tao Cor, commune Ia Hru, district of Cu Se, Province of Gia Lai. His family searched for him but was not able to locate him. The family asked the police station about the situation but the police refused to answer.
- ❑ On September the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2003, Vietnamese police arrested Y-Bem Nie who was born in 1972 because he is a Christian and supports MFI. Y-Bem is from the village of Buon Sut Hluot, district of Cu Mgar, Dak Lak province at around 12:00 mid night. The location of where he was taken to is unknown.
- ❑ On September the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2003, Y-Mai Nie who was born in 1973 from the village of Buon Blang, Cu Mgar district of Dak Lak province was arrested. The police wanted to kill him but instead they drugged him and took him with them. The location of where he was taken to is unknown.
- ❑ On September the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2003, Vietnamese police accused Y-Khiem Nie who was born in 1971, from the village of Buon Map, Cu Mgar district of Dak Lak province, of being Christians and helping the Degar refugees who are hiding from police in the area. His whereabouts is unknown.

- On September the 9<sup>th</sup> of 2003, Vietnamese government ordered the police to arrest our four Christians Brothers from Buon Hwing village of Cu Mgar district in Dak Lak Province. The four men whose names are listed below were arrested because they were Christians and suspected of helping the Degars who are hiding in the area. Their whereabouts are unknown.
  1. Y-Ki Nie, who was born in 1976
  2. Y-Rieng Kboh, who was born in 1968
  3. Y-Muh Rcam, who was born in 1968
  4. Y-Bli Rcam, who was born in 1978

**Arrest and Beatings of refugee's wives who have escaped to the US.**

- At around 7:00 o'clock in the morning on September the 3rd of 2003, H'Raih Nie, who was born in 1980, from the village of Buon Cuor Knia, district of Buon Don, province of Daklak, and whose husband is Y-Tri Buon Krong a Degar refugee living in the US was arrested and imprisoned. The police accused her of helping the Degars who are hiding in the area and bringing food to Degar prisoners at the prison camp. They arrested and took her to the prison in the district of Buon Don, province of Daklak. On September 13, 2003, the police hit her hard on her face and on her head and took her to the prison facility at the old radio station in Buonmathuot. The police have not let even her close family see her face. It is unclear if the attack has caused a facial deformity. The reason for her arrest and beating is due to the following incident:

At around 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon on August 30, 2003, Major Nguyen Van Phuc with his 20 soldiers surrounded H'Raih Nie's house in the search of Degars who were hiding in the area. With the mud on their boots, Nguyen Van Phuc and his soldiers entered H'Raih's house. H'Raih asked "Sirs, please wipe off the mud from your boots before you enter the house because I've just cleaned my floor." Nguyen Van Phuc replied "You have no right to say anything to me, do you want me to arrest you and put you in prison?" After that, H'Raih was quiet did not say any word. But it was too late because on September 3, 2003, Nguyen Van Phuc really kept his promise and accused H'Raih Nie of helping the Degar who were hiding in the area in order to have the right to arrest and imprison her. The real reason is not what they said but because they want to punish all Degar women whose husbands are in the US. So, he sent two Degar police, Y- Nem Hmok and Y-Khem Adrong, to arrest her at her house and took her to the prison at the district of Buon Don. H'Raih Nie has been forced to leave her old mother who is unable to care for herself. When H'Raih was taken, both of them were crying for each other bitterly.

- At around 7:00 o'clock in the morning on September 3, 2003, the same police arrested H'Pun Mlo, who was born in 1970, from the village of Buon Cuor Knia, district of Buon Don, province of Daklak, and whose husband is Y-Rit Hdok, a Degar refugee living now in the US. H'Pun Mlo has two children, Y-Toni Mlo, who was born on December 12, 1996 and H'Bon Mlo, who was born on October 10, 1998. Because her children have been crying day and night looking for their mother, H'Pun's relative took her children to go see their mother at the prison. But, the police refused to allow H'Pun to see her children. They would not even allow her children to see her face from afar. Her children keep crying; they never stop because they are by themselves at home. On September 11, 2003, the police released their mother, but are watching her closely and they have promised to come back and arrest her again. She lives in perpetual fear. Again, the punishment was not because of her wrong doing but because her husband escaped to the US.
- At around 7:30 am on September 16, 2003, Lt. Col. Pham Huu Nhap, the police chief, Major Nguyen Thanh That, the police chief assistant and Major Nguyen Van Phuc, the police interrogator, sent a Degar policeman Y-Khem Adrong to arrest H'Luc Ayun who was born in 1963, from the village of Buon Cuor Knia, district of Buon Don, province of Daklak at her house. They claimed

that she was helping Degars who were hiding in the area and also bringing food to Degar prisoners at the prison camp. So, Y-Khem Adrong, the policeman, arrested her on the same day and took her to a prison facility at the district of Buon Don. H'Luc Ayun's husband is Y-Brot Hmok, a Degar refugee who is now living in the US. On October 3, 2003, the police moved her to the prison facility in Buonmathuot. Her relatives went to see her at the prison but the police did not let them see her face. The Degar people believe that the reason the police did not allow the relatives of prisoners to see their faces is because the prisoners have been tortured so heavily and the police don't want their relatives to see their bruised bodies and faces. Again, the punishment of H'Luc Ayun was not because of her wrong doing but because her husband is in the US.

#### **Arrest and imprisonment for owning a cellular phone:**

On August 18, 2003, the Vietnamese police arrested our Christian Brother Y-Rin Nie who was born in 1979, from the village of Buon Poc, district of Cu Mgar, province of Daklak, for no reason just simply because he owns a cellular phone. The police imprisoned him at the facility in Cu Mgar district. On September 2, 2003, he was transferred to the prison in Buonmathuot.

#### **Confiscation of Montagnard lands without compensation**

The government wanted to expand its rubber plantation in the area of Cu Prong district, so, on July 27, 2003, they unlawfully confiscated the rice field belonging to Puih Jao -- 5,000 square meters. They also took the rice field belonging to Rahlan Khuc -- 1,000 meter square. They offered no compensation. The rice in the field was almost to the time of harvest, but the government took bulldozers and bulldozed it all without any kind of compensation. The Degar people believe this is part of their genocidal plan to force our people into poverty.

#### **Military Sweeping Operation and occupation of villages**

At the present time and taking the advantage of the fact that the Cambodia/Vietnam borders are closed to fleeing refugees - the Vietnamese government has begun carrying out an extensive sweeping operation in the Central Highlands starting from September this year. The Vietnamese government has brought more troops into the Central Highlands, which is increasing the human rights abuses toward the Degar people in the region.

In the commune of Habau in Gia Lai province the Vietnamese government has placed 13 soldiers.

- 1- At H'Noi's house in the village of Plei Kueng Grai, 7 soldiers.
- 2- At Prui house in the village of Plei Sao, 6 soldiers.

In the commune of Cu A, in Gia Lai province the Vietnamese government has placed 9 soldiers.

At Blit's house in the village of Plei Bong Ngol, 3 soldiers.

- 1- At H'Thoih's house in the village of Plei Bong Ngol, 3 soldiers
- 2- At Ril's house in the village of Plei Bong Ngol, 3 soldiers.

In the commune of Ia Pet in Gia Lai province the Vietnamese government has placed 44 soldiers.

- 1- In the village of Plei Al Hmoi, 13 soldiers.
- 2- In the village of Plei Bia Bre, 7 soldiers.
- 3- In the village of Plei Brong Goai, 10 soldiers.
- 4- In the village of Plei O Dot, 7 soldiers.
- 5- In the village of Plei Nglom Thung, 7 soldiers.

In the commune of Ia Bang, Gia Lai province the Vietnamese government has placed 60 soldiers.

- 1- In the village of Plei Het, 30 soldiers.
- 2- In the village of Plei Bong Lar, 30 soldiers.

In the commune Bo Ngong, Gia Lai province the Vietnamese government placed 100 soldiers.

- 1- In the commune of Bo Ngong itself, 50 soldiers.
- 2- In the village of Plei To Drah, 50 soldiers.

It is unknown exactly how many villages have been occupied throughout the central highlands as the Vietnamese police and army are using repressive measures to restrict communication from leaving the central highlands. Therefore, we appeal to the world to please help us and stop the inhumane actions and the scheme of genocide that the Vietnamese government intends to carry out against our indigenous people.

**The Montagnard Foundation urgently requests:**

- ❑ **the US Ambassador for International Religious Freedom – Mr. John Hanford – please try to visit the regions and victims listed in this report and investigate this information of human rights violations directed against the Montagnard Degar people.**
- ❑ **that the International community, the United Nations, European Union, democratic Governments and foreign donors pressure Vietnam to cease this persecution and to stop defying the concluding observations issued by the 2002 UN Human Rights Committee by refusing international monitors access to the Central Highlands where our people are suffering.**
- ❑ **that foreign donors carefully consider how foreign aid and assistance is being used in Vietnam is order to pressure Vietnam to stop persecuting indigenous people and Christians.**

**Unless urgent protection is taken these and other Montagnards are going to suffer and may even be killed.**

**October 2003**