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ASIA/VIETNAM - The Superior General of the Redemptorists, "Justice, peace, human rights for the church of Thai Ha"

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - "We admire the commitment of the Redemptorist Province of Vietnam for justice and for peace in Vietnam, especially for those who suffer violence and injustice, because of the efforts of those who, under the communist regime, carry out violence and ignore human rights. We have read of the recent attacks against the house of the Redemptorists in Hanoi. We pray that true justice will prevail and that the rights of all the members and parishioners are fully complied": these are the words, sent to Agenzia Fides, by Fr. Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R. Superior General of the Redemptorists, expressing to his brothers in Vietnam, the solidarity of the whole congregation, for the difficult situation they are experiencing.
For about a month the men religious of the parish of Thai Ha, in Hanoi, have been under constant intimidation and subjected to propaganda that, in official newspapers, describe them as "antisocial elements". The monastery is strictly controlled by the police, day and night with cameras. Recently, the military personnel stormed into the church during liturgical celebrations and Fr. Matthew Vu Khoi Phung, Superior of the Redemptorist Monastery, wrote a letter of protest sent to the People's Committee of Hanoi City. Several Vietnamese Catholic communities have expressed solidarity to the religious and have held prayer vigils in their support.
Behind the violence there is a dispute over the ownership of the land around the monastery, unjustly confiscated by the State. The land was bought regularly by the Redemptorists in 1928. After the Communists took control of North Vietnam, the local government gradually removed the land of the monastery and the parish. The area occupied by the monastery was reduced from the original 61,455 square meters to 2,700 square feet. In 2008, after protests on behalf of parishioners and a wave of arrests, the government converted the land into a public park. The religious ask for the land to be returned, producing legal documents that certify the property. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/11/2011)

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