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ASIA/LAOS - Converted to Christianity? Two soldiers discharged

Savannakhet (Agenzia Fides) - At the end of May 2012, Khamsorn and Tonglai, two members of the security forces in the village of Alowmai in the district of Phin, part of the province of Savannakhet, converted to Christianity. Soon after, their families followed them. The choice was not appreciated by the village chief, who reported their conversion to the police chief of the sub-district of Chudsume. They reaffirmed their right to do so, as all Laotian citizens enjoy freedom of worship. Dissatisfied, the village chief reported the story to the military command of the District of Phin, head of the security forces in the district.
On 14 June 2012, the command of the military district decided to permanently discharge Khamsorm and Tonglai from active service in the security forces, by withdrawing uniforms and weapons.
The dismissal took place as a result of their decision to embrace the Christian faith. "Kahmsorn and Tonglai faithfully served the nation and the citizens who reside in their village: now they are punished and disgraced because of their Christian faith," said the NGO "Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom" (HRWLRF) in a note sent to Fides. The NGO appeals to the government of Laos to respect the human rights and religious freedom of the citizens of Laos, guaranteed by the Loatian constitution, and demands the reinstatement of Khamsorn and Tonglai in active service among the security forces. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 22/6/2012)

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