



ASIA/LAOS - Christians arrested because "they explained the Bible"

Luang Namtha (Agenzia Fides) - The faithful Christians of at least 15 villages in the province of Luang Namtha in the north of Laos, have reported cases of intimidation and threats by some police officers who distrusted them from spreading the Christian faith. Sometimes, after the warnings, arrests are triggered: in recent days, four people, including two Thai nationals, were arrested by police in the province of Luang Namtha, because accused of "explaining the Bible to a Laotian man in the house of a local Christian." Their belongings were confiscated by the police and four were taken to the provincial prison of Luang Namtha. While, according to the practice, those arrested are usually held in a local jail, awaiting the progress of investigations, in this case the four were immediately transferred to the provincial prison, even without formal charges. According to the organization "Christian Solidarity Worldwide," the prisoners were not allowed any contact with members of their families or lawyers. Some Laotian Christians are trying to help them because the prisons of Laos do not provide food and adequate resources for prisoners.

The incident was reported to the Thai embassy in Laos.

These arrests follow that of a 53-year-old Protestant pastor, known as Asa, who was arrested on June 6, again in the province of Luang Namtha, for preaching the Christian faith. Two years ago, the Laotian police had forced him to sign several documents agreeing that he would not have proclaimed Christ and lead people to Christianity. A third series of arrests in the province of Luang Namtha occurred on March 24, when six Christians, all Thai nationals, were arrested for "spreading the Christian faith." The six were released after several weeks, after paying a heavy fine. These cases, notes the NGO CSW, "are part of a model of religious repression taking place in the province of Luang Namtha." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 06/07/2012)