



## **ASIA/VIETNAM - Authorities confirm the thesis of "suicide" for the Christian leader who died in prison**

Dak Nong (Agenzia Fides) - "Suicide by electric shock": the Vietnamese police authorities, after conducting an investigation, have confirmed such version concerning the 38 year-old Hoang Van Ngai, Christian leader of the Vietnamese Evangelical Church, who died on March 17 while he was in police custody in the district of Dak Glong, in South Vietnam. The case caused turmoil in the Vietnamese community of Hmong for months (see Fides 11/04/2013). Hoang Van Ngai's family does not believe the suicide version and believes that the man died as a result of beatings by prison officers.

According to Hoang Van Pa, the victim's elder brother, Hoang Van Ngai had many enemies among government officials, because he had protested against the abuses of power, he refused to pay bribes and had strenuously defended his church, when the authorities had ordered him to close it.

Ngai was arrested on March 15 with his older brother, Hoang Van Pa, his wife and sister in law, without any arrest warrant. His brother heard noises and screams from the cell next to his and then saw his brother being led away by the guards "completely inert, as if he were dead, with purple marks on his throat." The photographs of Ngai's body show severe bruises that were not there before detention. After the protests, the authorities ordered an investigation which today confirmed the first version provided by the prison police, who spoke of "electric shock" caused by the victim.

In a note sent to Fides, the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide" (CSW), said: "The man seems to have been targeted for his Christian faith and his determination to resist corrupt officials", stating that the case reveals the violation of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", including provisions against arbitrary deprivation of life (art. 6), arbitrary detention (Article 10), and the use of torture or cruel treatment or punishment, inhuman and degrading treatment (Article 7). CSW, along with other human rights organizations, call for "a new investigation accompanied by witnesses from other prisoners and photographic proof" to clarify the circumstances of the arrest, detention and death. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 12/06/2013)