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ASIA/LAOS – Renounce Christian faith or leave: authorities order to 11 families

Borikhamsai (Agenzia Fides) – The authorities of the village of Nongdaeng, in the Borikan district, Province of Borikhamsai, ordered 11 families who converted to Christianity (in all about 50 people) to renounce their Christian faith and to return to their animist religion, worth the expulsion from the village. Family representatives were summoned on August 30 by civil servants for Religious Affairs, who invited them to abandon "the religion of Western foreign power, which is destructive to the nation of Laos". Christians were given three days to think about their situation. On Sunday 1 September, however, Christian families got together in a house for a liturgical ceremony, reiterating that they have full right to practice their faith freely, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Laos.

The conversion of these families in the village of Nongdaeng took place between April and May 2013. Three families began to pray in their homes and other eight families in the neighborhood slowly joined them, embracing the Christian faith.

In an appeal sent to Fides, the NGO "Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom" asks the Lao government to allow people who live in Nongdaeng to worship the Christian faith, respecting freedom of conscience and religion.

The NGOs also called on the government to punish officials for an "order of renunciation and eviction from the village", which, according to the current legislation, is "completely illegal". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 04/09/2013)

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