



ASIA/VIETNAM - Petition of religious leaders for the release of prisoners of conscience

Hanoi (Agenzia Fides) - The Vietnamese religious leaders unite to demand the immediate release of 14 young Catholics and Protestants currently detained because of their political views. The leaders have signed and spread a petition, sent to Fides Agency by the Province of the Redemptorists religious in Vietnam. In the text, signed by Catholic and Protestant religious leaders, as well as Buddhist leaders of various denominations, asks for "justice and respect for human rights in Vietnam". The petition is addressed to the members of the National Assembly of Vietnam, the governments and various international institutions such as the UN Council for Human Rights, based in Geneva, called to "monitor the situation". In calling for the immediate release of the 14 young people and other "prisoners of conscience", the petition calls on the government not to use torture and to allow medical care to prisoners.

In recent months, Vietnam has been criticized by groups and NGOs regarding the behavior towards activists who defend freedom of expression and respect for human rights. On 2 October the Catholic lawyer and human rights activist Le Quoc Quan was sentenced to 30 months in prison on charges of tax evasion, but according to some NGOs, the charges are politically motivated. As reported to Fides by a well-known NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide", the Vietnamese government has also blocked and repressed free demonstrations of Catholic faithful who sought the right to the land and the release of detainees in prison without trial. CSW calls for respect of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience in Vietnam, stating that these are the preconditions for the development of a peaceful and fair society. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 07/10/2013)