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ASIA/VIETNAM - The UN Special Rapporteur: "Serious violations of religious freedom"

Hanoi (Agenzia Fides) - "Serious violations of freedom of religion or belief are a reality in Vietnam", said Heiner Bielefeldt, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion, at the conclusion of the official visit to Vietnam, which ends on 1 August, where he met with government officials and local authorities as well as representatives of religious communities. As reported to Fides by the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide" (CSW), which followed the visit, during the scheduled visits in the provinces of An Giang, Gia Lai and Kon Tum some witnesses, representatives and activists who wanted to meet with the UN Rapporteur "have been intimidated, harassed or blocked by the police".
In the three provinces, religious freedom violations, including attacks against Catholics and Protestants in Kon Tum in 2012 and 2013 were recorded.
At the conclusion of his visit, Bielefeldt made reference to the "generally contemptuous, negative attitude towards the rights of minorities and individuals who practice their religion outside of institutional channels", the "limitation in the field of human rights", as well as "vague formulations within the Criminal Code on abuse of democratic freedoms". While acknowledging the progress made, the Special Rapporteur noted that "serious violations" happen even today. "Bielefeldt will submit a report containing his findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in 2015. CS, sharing the concerns expressed by the Rapporteur calls on the Vietnamese Government to ensure that none of the witnesses who talked with Bielefeldt is penalized after his departure from Vietnam . (PA) (Agenzia Fides 01/08/2014)

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