



4.2.19

VIETNAM | Human Rights Committee Concerned About Treatment

The UN Human Rights Committee urged Vietnam to prevent violence, discrimination and all acts of “undue interference with the freedom of religion” in the country.

In its concluding observations following a review of Vietnam’s implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in March, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern that, “Members of religious communities and their leaders, predominantly unregistered or unrecognized religious groups, ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples face various forms of surveillance, harassment, intimidation, property seizure or destruction, and forced to renounce their faith, pressure to join a competing sect, and physical assaults, which sometimes leads to death.”

The committee also highlighted the restrictive nature of the 2016 Law on Belief and Religion, and furthermore said it was “disturbed by reports that non-State actors, such as the ‘Red Flag Associations’ attack Catholic communities, and are involved in propaganda activities that promote and incite religious discrimination, violence and hate speech.”

In a report submitted ahead of the committee’s review of Vietnam, CSW also raised concerns regarding the law, and said, “The situation for religious communities varies widely between different parts of Viet Nam, and those in remote areas belonging to ethnic minorities, as well as unregistered religious groups, are particularly at risk of violations.”

CSW’s report also criticized the use of arbitrary detention and torture against those who defend the right to freedom of religion or belief and stand up for the most vulnerable in society, and called on Vietnam to “immediately release all prisoners of conscience detained in connection with their religion or belief, and investigate cases of wrongful imprisonment.”

The Human Rights Committee called on Vietnam to bring its legislation into conformity with Article 18 of the ICCPR, which protects the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), and recommended that Vietnam take measures to prevent discrimination and

other violations of FoRB, and to respond to such violations when they do take place, ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We welcome the Human Rights Committee's attention on violations and restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in Vietnam. CSW continues to receive reports of violations against Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists and other religious groups, as well as disturbing reports of violence against religious freedom defenders such Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton and legal expert Nguyen Bac Truyen. We echo the Committee's recommendations that Vietnam take measures to prevent interference with freedom of religion or belief, and any incidents of hate speech, incitement to discrimination, violence or alleged hate crime."