

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1937/05

by Marco Pannella (ALDE) and Emma Bonino (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Human rights violations against the Montagnard people of the Vietnam Highlands

According to the 16-page report published by Human Rights Watch on 12 May 2005, the Vietnamese Government is continuing to force Montagnard Christians to change their faith. According to Brad Adams, head of HRW's Asia Division, "Montagnards who attempt to practice their religion independently still face assaults and live in fear."

In March and April 2005, security forces in the province of Gia Lai conducted search operations in the houses of women whose husbands are in hiding in the jungle, during which some of the women were beaten.

Vietnam continues to refuse international inspectors free access to the Central Highlands in order to ascertain the circumstances of the Montagnard refugees repatriated by Cambodia.

On 14 March 2005, local police summoned a villager from Ia Grai district in Gia Lai Province, interrogated him and warned him not to practise religion without the government's permission or he would be arrested again.

In late March 2005, the Dak Lak police arrested a Montagnard pastor and six relatives of another pastor. Two of those arrested were subsequently released, but only after one of them had been forced to declare that he had worked as a pastor without government approval, while there has been no news of the other five.

On 26 April 2005, the police in the Ia Grai district of Gia Lai Province summoned three villagers, ordering them to report to the local municipal buildings. The police officers interrogated them, accused them of 'heading the separation of the believers' and ordered them to renounce their beliefs.

In April 2005, a Montagnard from the Cu Se district of Gia Lai Province was arrested and detained at the district police station, where he was beaten, forced to drink alcohol, ordered to stop believing in Jesus and beaten unconscious.

On 25 February 2005, two police officers from Ia To commune in the Ia Grai District summoned two men and a woman for interrogation. The two men were beaten until one of them lost consciousness. They were threatened with arrest if they continued to practise their religion.

In view of the above, could the Commission indicate:

- whether it is aware of the events referred to above, and if so what action it has taken;
- whether, in the light of these continuing violations of human rights, it intends to denounce the cooperation agreements signed with Vietnam?