

Luang Namtha Provincial Authorities Cracking Down on Religious Assembly
Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRF)
Advocacy Alert No. 03/ 2011
July 12, 2011

Around noon on July 10, 2011 (Sunday), Luang Namtha provincial authorities arrested Pastor Seng Aroun, Souchiad, Naikwang, and Kofa at a house church in Sounya village in Namtha district of Luang Namtha province where Christian believers had gathered for worship service. The charge was assembling for worship without approval.

Christian believers in Sounya village normally hold their weekly Sunday worship services in an anonymous member's house. But on July 10, believers of Sounya village decided to meet in a member's house whose name is Kofa. In May 2011, Kofa had vehicle accident resulting in a death of another person and therefore Kofa desired to hold Sunday service in his house so that matter relating to vehicle accident could be resolved.

Thus, Kofa invited Pastor Seng Aroun, Souchiad, and Naikwang from Kon Church in Kon village in the same district to the worship service in his house in order to seek guidance from these three men in regard to resolving matter relating to the death from Kota's vehicle accident. After the worship service, Luang Namtha provincial authorities arrested the three men from Kon village as well as Kofa at the house church meeting in Sounya village.

All four men are being detained in prison at Luang Namtha provincial prison, pending police investigation.

The HRWLRF urges the Lao government to respect the Lao Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by the Lao government and release immediately the four men who were arrest for exercising their constitutionally guaranteed freedom to gather for worship according to their Christian religious belief.