

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT

NOVEMBER 2011

Pastor Wanna Laos



Pastor Wanna Photo: CSW-HK

Numerous small villages usually comprised of somewhere between 10 and 50 families can be found all across Laos. Pastor Wanna was the first person in his village to become a Christian and within a relatively short period of time another 25 families consisting of 105 individuals had received Christ.

Between 2008 and 2009, Pastor Wanna was summoned several times to the district police station where he was questioned and threatened with arrest and imprisonment if he did not recant his Christian faith. He was initially imprisoned in Hinboun district prison from May to October 2010, having been charged with leading other people to embrace the Christian faith, thus allegedly destroying Lao customs and tradition. When he was released in October 2010 he was told not to practise the Christian faith and instructed to stop holding worship meetings in his home. He continued doing both.

Pastor Wanna had in fact informed village authorities that Christians would be holding a Christmas gathering at his home on January 5th (2011). Around the same time, the Lao Government's Department of Religious Affairs was officially informed by evangelical Christian denominational leaders that the Christmas celebrations throughout the country would take place from December 5 (2010) to January 15 (2011). However, on January 4, Pastor Wanna of Nakoon village, Pastor Yohan from neighbouring Tonglar village, and nine others including two children were arrested by the Hinboun district police at pastor Wanna's house.

The authorities accused the believers of gathering for a Christmas celebration without approval. Their gathering was politically interpreted as a 'secret meeting' and thus they were criminally charged. The nine were released after paying fines but the two pastors remain imprisoned. It is hoped that both men will be released in January 2012. During their time in prison both the pastors have been told they could walk free if they signed documents recanting their faith.

Release contacts in Laos have asked if Christians in the UK would pray for Pastor Wanna's wife, Champa. Now with her husband imprisoned yet again she has been under real pressure to abandon the Christian faith. She has found it difficult not just to provide for her family but to make sense of the problems they have experienced since becoming Christians. 'She needs our prayers and our support at this time,' they said.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

'I am in chains for Christ' Philippians 1:13

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That both Pastor Wanna and Pastor Yohan will be released.
- ▶ That God will encourage, strengthen and embolden Champa in her faith.
- ▶ For unity, wisdom and courage for church leaders in Laos.

PLEASE GET INVOLVED

Release's partners in Laos have asked if we would pray specifically for Pastor Wanna's family over the Christmas period. To encourage and inform those prayers we have included Pastor Wanna and his wife Champa in our 'Christmas Chains' initiative.

Please take time to download the Christmas Chains materials from the Release website www.releaseinternational.org or contact the office and order a 'Christmas chains' pack.

On the advice of our partners in Laos we are not encouraging supporters to write to the Lao authorities at present. We are, however encouraging them to pray for the authorities in Laos and to support their Laotian brothers and sisters in Christ.

Release International produces the Prisoners of Faith alert every month as part of its ministry to support persecuted Christians. To receive your own copy free of charge by email, please register your details at www.releaseinternational.org/signup.

If you would like to make a financial donation to support Christian Prisoners of Faith and their families, you may give securely online at www.releaseinternational.org/donate, or by calling 01689 823491. Registered Charity 280577.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

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