



ພັນທະມິດເພື່ອປະຊາທິປະໄຕໃນລາວ

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY IN LAOS

Alliance pour la Démocratie au Laos

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ADL statement on the arrest of video bloggers and critics of inadequate isolation of returning Laotian workers.

Radio Free Asia and other news sources have reported that on March 28, 2020, Mr. Kot, 27, was arrested by the authorities in Pak Thiing Village, Thababuli District, Bolikhamxay Province, with the accusation of not cooperating with the authorities 14 day isolation related to the COVID- 19 pandemic. Mr. Kot was one of the Laotian guest workers who came back from Thailand.

On a video that he had published on Facebook you can see how he criticized the conditions in the quarantine camps. He criticized the poor hygiene, the lack of cleanliness, the lack of medical personnel and the crowding of too many people in a confined space. He expressed his fear of being infected with CORVID-19. Despite a later public apology, he was arrested and handcuffed.

Background: Since March 23, 2020, several 10,000 workers from Thailand have returned to Laos. These workers were put in military transports by the Laotian authorities and taken to an unknown destination. There is no official announcement about it.

Since the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the world, the government of the Laotian VR has long claimed that there are no infected people in Laos. But now the authorities have admitted for the first time that there are nine infected people (March 31, 2020). However, some frequent deaths among the population have raised concerns that CORVID-19 could be the cause of the death, and the authorities then ponder without further investigation and even continue to prohibit reports of such deaths or the spread of the virus by the population.

We the Alliance for Democracy in Laos and all people who stand for justice for Laos at home and abroad see that the allegations that Mr. Kot was arrested were misrepresented. Prejudice is the typical way to intimidate young people in Laos, with the aim that none of the just people dares to express their opinion. This also happens because it should be covered up that the local authorities do not care about the people.

The crowding of the returned guest workers from Thailand in a confined space without the possibility to keep the minimum distance of 1.5m from each other does not meet the recommendations of the WHO.

We see that the returning Laotian workers were isolated, but strangely enough, not the tens of thousands of people arriving from China in the same period. This is a clear difference in treatment.

The Lao PDR has received a lot of help from abroad to combat CORVID-19, including U\$ 102mill. from the USA and U\$ 200mill. from ASEAN Development Bank. The government has not released any information about the use of these sums to the public.

For this reason, we ask the government of Laos to:

- 1. Immediately and unconditionally to release Mr. Kot and all other Laotian young workers, this also applies to all others arrested who stand for justice in Laos.**
- 2. We demand the immediate implementation of the WHO standards for isolation with the possibility of a safety distance between people of 1.5m.**
- 3. We demand the admission of all returning workers, whether with or without documents, and we also ask that international aid be used to ensure that these people can live decently.**
- 4. We request that the names of all returned workers and their current whereabouts be published so that their relatives can find them.**
- 5. We call on the government of Laos to report truthfully how many dead and infected are actually registered in Laos by CORVID-19 so that they can protect the population.**
- 6. We demand that human rights are respected for the people of Laos so that they can speak openly about what is really happening in the country and so that the authorities can help quickly and effectively.**

We appeal to the international community:

- 1. That the WHO may increase its pressure on the Laotian VR to implement the international standards to combat CORVID-19.**
- 2. We recommend that the international community closely monitor and control what the truth about CORVID-19 is in Laos.**
- 3. We appeal to the international community to increase the pressure to meet the above requirements.**
- 4. We ask the UN to urge the Laos government to implement the Laos Human Rights Convention, particularly the right to an opinion.**

Germany March 31, 2020



Dr. Bounthone Chanthavong-Wiese

President, Alliance for Democracy in Laos

CC:

- Prime minister Lao PDR Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister office
- WHO, Geneva
- UN Human Rights Council and High Commissioner for Human Rights
- UN Lao PDR
- Amnesty International, London, Bangkok
- Various Human rights organizations
- Auswärtiges Amt Germany

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