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ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY IN LAOS

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ADL Statement about 42 Years Human Rights Violations in Laos

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Ladies and Gentlemen.

Laos has been ruled by dictatorial single party since 1975 which heavily influenced and dominated by its neighbour Vietnam. Under special Friendship treaty signed 18 July 1977, this agreement allows Vietnam to dictate, interfere and control with all areas of Lao administrative mechanism in the country.

On January 2014, UPR has issued 196 recommendations for LPDR authority to improve of human rights condition and situation in the country, as of today we can report that the situation is getting from bad to worse with no end in sight.

Lao people are excluding from participating in running the country, Lao people continues living under oppression fearing and unable to freely express and voice their concern. Facebook and social media are also being strictly monitored and censored.

Here are some documented reported and case examples for human rights violations past 42 years:

1. The Lao PDR has not helped to elucidate the disappearance of Sombath Somphone!

Issue: On December 15, 2012, Mr. Sombath Somphone, respected and popular civil society leader, was abducted at a police outpost on outskirts of Vientiane. The incident was captured by the government's CCTV. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSZzk3Ay1M>) It's almost two years on and he still has not been seen or heard from. The government's third and latest official report on the case does not yield any knowledge or relevant information on the case. The Government of Laos has not accepted the help of the EU and the United States on the grounds that internal security was endangered as a result.

2. There is no freedom of the Press in the Lao PDR

Issue: The party, through the ministry of information and culture (MIC), owns, controls and directs all the domestic press and media which serve as a mouthpiece for reflecting and touting the party line and touting the party leaders' activities. Information, even in non-political material, is closely scrutinized in advance of airing or publication. Lack of legal protection and fear of disapproval and punishment by the government punishment has propagated endemic self-censorship, which is likely the reason why reporters do not languish in prison as they do in Vietnam or China. The government also controls the internet in Laos. In its 2017 World Press Index, Reporters Without Borders ranks Lao PDR 170 out of 179 countries. <https://rsf.org/en/laos>

3. Human Rights Defenders are suppressed by the Lao government

Issue: The Lao PDR has imprisoned many Human Rights defender and pro-democracy advocates. So in March 2016 three migrant workers has been imprisoned and sentenced up to 20 years for criticize the government.

In March 2015 a polish citizen has been imprisoned for criticize the government online.

<http://www.laoalliance.org/h-r2017>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/pardon-12032015173716.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhR2fVSB5lw>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/sentences-05162017165950.html>

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/student-leaders-10272014184121.html>

4. Corruption and Land grabs goes hand in Hand at the Lao PDR

Issue: The Lao citizens are protected by law for their right of habitat. But all over the time local government and authorities got land and concessions to foreign investors and undermines the central government in Vientiane. The combating of these cases is inefficient and the calls for help by the people are ignored.

So a dozen residents of a village in southeastern Laos' Sekong province have been arrested for chopping down trees on land used by a Vietnamese rubber company.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/lao-authorities-arrested-in-11-year-old-land-dispute-in-sekong-province-08012017155944.html>

In February 2017 50 families at the Champhassak province has to be go out from their home because corrupt officials has sold the land to foreign investors for an unclear project. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtQJTQmoFvI>

5. Laos is one of the most corrupt countries in the world!

Issue: Transparency international and other NGO's reports all over the years, that Laos is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The range changes from rank 123 to 168, up and down.

<http://www.laoalliance.org/economy>

<https://www.transparency.org/country/LAO>

<http://www.laoalliance.org/corruption>

6. The Lao PDR allows that foreign investors illegally cutting down the forest, destroying the livelihood of the people.

Issue: Non-profit organizations Global Witness and Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), report that Vietnamese companies are involved in illegal logging and land grabbing within Laos and Cambodia. Through the UK-based Global Witness investigation, the negative impact of the Vietnamese company Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) is accountable for the ecological destruction of the Mekong basin. Source:

<http://www.laoalliance.org/upload/EIA-Crossroads-report-FINAL-low.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzJaitMxEhk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3epqpR9OBhY>

7. The Lao People's Republic has worked up the dark chapter of re-education camps to this day!

Issue: In the late 1970's until the mid 80's, more than eighty- thousands of Laotians, including the King, Queen, the Crown Prince and other members of royalty, ministers and other leaders of the government, civil servants, military and police officials, civilians and ordinary citizens were rounded up and sent off to so-called 're-education camps' which were in reality concentration camps. There, many thousand's perished under brutal

prison conditions, disease, starvation, torture or execution. Most are still missing and unaccounted for.

8. The Lao PDR does not allow freedom of assembly and block any of a peaceful demonstration against abuses.

Issue: On 26 October 1999 and in November 2009, more than 300 people, mostly students and teachers, had protest non-violent for democracy and freedom in Vientiane. Several hundred were arrested. Mr. Thongpaseuth Keuakoun, Mr. Sengaloun Phengphanh, Mr. Bouavanh Chanmanivong, Mr. Khamphouvieng Sisaath and Mr. Keochay known as leaders of the protest were jailed and tortured in 1999 until this day, meanwhile Mr. Khamphouvieng Sisaath was killed by torture in the jail and Mr. Keochay disappeared. (source: Laos: an overview of human rights violations, FIDH 2012) Lao government do not allow Amnesty International into the country to take further investigation to this case. Sources:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/annual-report-laos-2013> ,

<http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-350292>

9. The Lao People's Republic prohibits any form of opposition, and thus the population takes every opportunity to influence policy!

Issue: The law allows only one political party and forming other political parties is absolutely illegal. The Lao communist party, the ruling party, which accounts for 2% of the population, continues to controls all political life from the national government down to the village authority.

The people have no right to choose their own government or to change the government.

There is no free election: the people cannot elect the representatives of their choice since the candidates for the legislature are all handpicked by the state-party from among the well-connected party members.

There is no separation of powers. Power is concentrated in the executive branch run by the leadership of the party. The National Assembly, the legislative branch, merely serves to rubberstamp the decisions of the executive branch. For questioning the relevance of Marxism-Leninism to Laos in the National Assembly, Representative Khampheuy Panemalaythong, was stripped of all his positions in the state-party in May 2012.(Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iV3TH1DKygc>

Radio Free Asia, <http://www.rfa.org/lao/news-about-laos/lao-senior-official-suspended-criticizing-party-06072012110954.html>

Though he did not advocate a multi-party system for Laos, but he demands more freedom. Dr. Khampheuy was subjected for number days to an inquisition with the threat and intimidation that he would be responsible for the consequences to follow. He was further ordered to retrieve all the copies of the journal sold. Similarly, the judiciary is not independent but subservient to the dictates of the party leadership particularly in the prosecution of dissidents.

The people have no say in governance. In mid-2012, the National Assembly put up a hot line for the people to call the members, by the end of the year the line was scrubbed when it turned out that of the 300 calls received from the people 280 complained about the land deals. Lack of popular participation coupled with a muzzled domestic press and media is shutting the people, particularly those with the most critical needs like the rural poor and the ethnic minorities, out of the development and political decision-making process.

Political opposition and dissenting opinions are strictly forbidden, swiftly dealt with and brutally repressed.

Dissidents are subjected to intimidation, abduction, arrest, incognito detention, trial and imprisonment with no due process and face death from starvation, sickness, torture or execution in the prisons.

(US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: Laos, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=220206#wrapper>);

Professor Martin Stuart Fox, Freedom House, Countries at the Crossroads 2011: Laos http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/LAOSFINAL.pdf ;

US Library of Congress, Laos : a country study, https://archive.org/details/laoscountrystudy00sava_0

10. The right to religious freedom is violated in Laos!

Issue: Religion is also under tight state control particularly the beliefs of the ethnic minorities who continue to suffer harsh persecutions like banishment, church confiscation, forced renouncement or reversion to animism, arrest and incarceration in shackles and wooden stocks.

Religious persecution continues as we speak. As recently as August 30, 2012, 50 Christians in central Bolikhamsai province were ordered to reconvert to their traditional animist religion. Earlier in the same province, the police arrested a Christian for converting 300 Laotians to Christianity (<http://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-leader-arrested-for-converting-300-people/59216>)

The brunt of the religious crackdowns falls on Christians, with the Protestants being hit harder than Catholics. So in May 2014 as the police arrested Lao Christians in the city of Paksong (south Laos) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_smTc6TkIrs

11. Land and property rights are sold to foreign investors in Laos, regardless of the local population!

Issue: The government of the Lao PDR has made concessions of land to foreign investors, as a part of their economy politics, in many provinces in the country where, under the guise of a special economic zone, Lao people hasn't any right to object. The government of the Lao PDR has allowed foreign businesses to invest substantially in the country from north to south by taking over land properties of the population forcibly without fair compensation and those landowners who protest have been arrested, incarcerated and tortured without due process. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3epqpR9OBhY> ,

The government of the Lao PDR has made concessions of land to China under soft leases with terms up to as long as ninety-nine years in many provinces in the north of the country where, for example in the area of the golden triangle, Bokeo province, under the guise of a special economic zone, China built 'Chinatowns' and casinos to be populated by 200.000 of Chinese without Lao people having any right to object. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3OPZUjZa5c>

12. The rights of habitat, livelihood and food security are insufficiently respected in Laos!

Issue: The mining and logging operations are depleting the natural resources of the country which Laotians regard as national treasures, causing in the process devastating and irreparable damages to the environment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3epqpR9OBhY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzJaitMxEhk>

Along with the multitude of dams that will clog the length of the Mekong river and its tributaries, they have already scarred the once pristine beauty of Laos' natural

landscape. They will end up destroying the biodiversity and ecosystem of the country. The giant Xayaburi dam is being built despite the protestations of the people of riparian neighboring countries and despite the reservations and warnings of international environmental groups. It will adversely affect not only the people of Laos but also of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. It is estimated that the food supply (from fishing, rice farming and other watershed farming) of 50 million people will be at risk along with their habitat.

13. The Lao People's Republic has failed to stop the rampant human trafficking of people from Laos effective!

Issue: Despite their contribution to the fast economic growth in recent years, the government's mega-development projects have not helped ameliorate the deep chronic lack of employment opportunities (exacerbated by substantial inflows of immigrants from Vietnam and China), and the widening income gap between the rich and the poor and between the urban centers and the rural areas.

The government of the Lao PDR neglects the youth, girls and boys, in the hundreds of thousands, who become victims of the black market as slave laborers and prostitutes in Thailand and instead of being concerned and seeking solutions to the problem the government manufactures narcotics like methamphetamines for sale in neighboring countries while affecting also the youth in Laos (videos, girls, passports, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzEehdA6ail#t=64> , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3WT99b9FM8> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1kT9lFfO0Y#t=46>

14. The problem of drug trafficking is largely ignored in Laos by the Lao officials.

Issue: The drug problem in Laos grows up rapidly, because the problem has been neglect by the government, Lao youth who should be regarded as the backbone of the country have come to lose their potentialities and become useless methamphetamine addicts. Corrupt officials protect this business and allow the production of methamphetamines. We think that more than 30% of the young people in Laos are addicted by drugs.

Example: According to the close of the police in their Champasak, where upstream go to informed in February 2014 that the House of Champasak, lessons on right with ATS filled in a room than many varieties and many colors together closer, saw the dollar index filled completely mad. This shows that the illegal drug trade is a person of authority in his ownership. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/10/11/laos-drug-users-undesirables-detained-abused>

15. Well known civil-society organizations and Human Rights organizations work is prohibited in Laos!

Issue: The stated aim of the 2009 Decree on Associations is to provide a legal basis for the establishment of local NGO's or NPA's (non-profit associations, which nomenclature in itself reflects the party's aversion to all things non-governmental). In practice, it is used as control mechanism for reining in civil society. The government selectively allows Lao NPA's through a system of registration that involves a highly intrusive screening process including comprehensive in-home police background checks of NPA applicants most of whom have been told to change their organization name, objectives, board members, and to water down their position. (No democracy or rights-related NGO's exist in the country. The word 'rights' is censored from their documentation.) Even registered NPA's cannot choose to represent themselves at major events and meetings, which privilege is reserved for well-placed retired government officials.

Ms. Gindroz writes in a personal letter to development partners in Lao PDR that the NPA's at AEPF9 "who supported [farmers and villagers] to participate are being investigated still to this day." (Quoted by Simon Creak and Keith Barney in New Mandala, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/expulsion-12072012153813.html?searchterm=utf8:ustring=Anne-Sophie+Gindroz+>)

This set the stage for the pall of fear that fell across the nascent civil society landscape following the expulsion of Gindroz and the forced abduction of Sombath Somphone. (The impact is felt even overseas where many Lao expatriates are thinking twice about plans for visiting their homeland.)

16. The right to health is in communist Laos dependent on the social origins!

Issue: In the health care system, it is exclusively a matter of asking the people to checkout. Uncontrolled ask doctors and hospitals to checkout. Honorable and high officials can use the system for free. The health of the population does not seem to be the focus of hospitals, doctors and the government. To be sick in Laos is a deadly risk. It is questionable where the development aid has remained for the health system for Laos.

17. The protection of workers is not practiced in the "workers and farmers state" Laos!

Issue: The workers in Laos are indeed protected by law, but in practice, the workers have no way to do something about grievances in their work environment. Protective clothing or safety techniques there is virtually no in Laos. Workers fall ill in large numbers because they are exposed to poisons or drinking contaminated water. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3ZRQRjhj3c&feature=youtu.be>

18. The Government of the Lao People's Republic sold the political independence to Vietnam!

Issue: Laos depends first and foremost by Viet Nam, particularly militarily and politically, and secondarily the influence by China. The government of the Lao PDR made long time land leases in many provinces, mainly in the north, with China; populated by hundred thousand of Chinese people with their own administration, this is a new kind of colonialism. Vietnam's advancement in making Laos a colony has taken new forms other than political and economic controls as can be seen in the culture and language sectors. In recent years, schools have opened in Laos in which Lao students are taught entirely in Vietnamese. in Laos. This is clearly to undermine the Lao culture. In addition, the awarding of scholarships the preference is for students from schools with the Vietnamese language and curriculum. It discriminates against the students from the Lao-language schools and puts them at a disadvantage. <http://www.laoalliance.org/economy>

We appeal to the United Nations general secretary:

- 1. That the United Nations will use their relations to urge the government of the Lao PDR to Respect and practice human rights according to the principles, treaties and conventions to which the Lao PDR is a signatory including the freedom of information and the press without restrictions from the party, the freedom to form political parties and organizations like NGO's, freedom of assembly, freedom to make criticism of the party's errors and mistakes. Stop decree no 327!**
- 2. The United Nations are very most coordinators for development aid for Laos. This aid can be used for the development of justice and human rights. Suppress corruption urgently**

without exception and ensure that international aid truly benefit the people the development aid has to be for the poor people in Laos and not for the privileged people. The money and the projects have to be directly for people. Laos needs a comprehensive improvement of the health, school and infrastructure system.

3. That the UN- bodies will do everything for the immediately release of Somphone Phimmasone, Lothkham Thammavong , Soukanh Chaithat and Bounthanh Thammavong including all other political prisoners in Laos
4. The U- bodies shall help the disappeared human right defenders in Laos. We demand the publication of the truth about Mr. Sombath Somphone and all the other disappeared people in Laos who advocates for freedom, human rights and democracy.
5. That the United Nations will use their influence to reform Laos. Effect changes towards a genuine democratic system of government with multiple political parties and legitimate free elections under the supervision of the United Nations.
6. The United Nations to take attention on the exploitation problems in that region. Cease the expropriation of people's lands for the benefits of foreigners, the sale of Lao natural resources and urgently stop the flood of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants into Laos. Stop the destruction of the environment, natural resources and wild life of Laos, and cease the unchecked construction of dams and polluting factories and end the massive land grabs all over the country!
7. The United Nations can be able to help the young people in Laos. Stop the neglect of youth and safeguard them from drug addiction and prostitution, create equal educational opportunities for Lao youth without any discrimination and eliminate corruption in the education system.

Yours faithfully



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