



21 September 2010  
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**UN Human Rights Council  
 Fifteenth, 13 September – 1 October 2010**

**Item 6:  
 Consideration of UPR reports**

**Lao People's Democratic Republic**

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the engagement of the Lao People's Democratic Republic with the UPR as part of its stated efforts to promote and protect human rights.

We deeply regret, however, that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has rejected the recommendation to release peaceful demonstrators.<sup>1</sup>

At least five men were arrested on 26 October 1999 for attempting to hold a peaceful demonstration in Vientiane and calling for peaceful economic, political and social change. Three are reported to remain in detention despite having completed their 10-year prison sentences. Thongpaseuth Keuakoun, [a father of seven children,] Seng-Aloun Phengphanh and Bouavanh Chanhmanivong should have been released at the latest in October 2009.

Amnesty International strongly urges the Lao authorities to release the three men immediately and unconditionally, and to demonstrate its commitment to protecting human rights in practice.

We welcome the government's support of those recommendations, announced in the Addendum to the outcome report, that call for full implementation of ICCPR provisions related to freedom of speech, including through review of domestic legislation.<sup>2</sup> We are disappointed, however, that recommendations to revoke laws

<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/15/5, paragraph 99.3.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/15/5, paragraphs 98.41, 98.43 and 98.44, and A/HRC/15/5, Add.1, paragraph 1.

that suppress the right to freedom of expression and assembly were rejected.<sup>3</sup> The reasons provided for rejection appear to reflect the government's wish to retain the current strong limitations on the right to freedom of expression, which are contrary to the ICCPR provisions it claims to support. We urge the government to reconsider its rejection.

Mr. President,

Several states made recommendations with regard to the thousands of Lao Hmong, including refugees and asylum-seekers forcibly returned from Thailand to Laos in December 2009.<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International regrets the government's only partial support for these recommendations and urges the government to ensure unhindered and independent access by UNHCR and humanitarian agencies to all returnees in resettlement sites at Phalak and Nongsan in Vientiane Province and Phonkham in Borikhamsay Province. While the authorities have organized several visits to these sites for diplomats and journalists, we are concerned that full and free access has not been provided and opportunities for returnees to speak freely to visitors without repercussions were extremely limited, thereby hampering a proper assessment of conditions and treatment of returnees.

The Lao government has a responsibility to respect the right of all persons to seek asylum, as provided in the ICCPR, and Amnesty International welcomes the government's assurances that all Lao citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age or other ground, may apply for travel documents at any time. We urge the government to uphold this provision at all times, as recommended in the review, and to refrain from any actions which interfere with this right.

Thank you, Mr President.

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<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/15/5, paragraphs 98.42 and 98.45, and A/HRC/15/5, Add.1, section III, paragraphs 25 and 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, paragraphs 98.27, 98.28, 98.29, 98.30, 98.31 and 98.32.