

2ñ-ê½-´ò-a-À²^o-½§¾è½-



-i¾,

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY IN LAOS

Letmather Str.71, 58119 Hagen, Germany. Tel & Fax: 0049(2334) 44 44 668, [E-Mail: alliance-lao@alice.de](mailto:alliance-lao@alice.de)

www.laoalliance.org

Detailed Human rights report on the Lao PDR for UPR 2019 by the ADL

Background: Laos is one of the five remaining communist countries in the world and Lao is one of the less developed countries in the world. Laos became a communist one-party state in 1975. Since then, all parties except the Communist Party have been banned. The state and the party control all media and all organizations in the country. Laos is considered one of the most repressive countries in the world. At the 2015 UPR Cycle, the Lao People's Republic received 196 recommendations regarding the human rights situation from the working group of the Universal Periodic Report. However, many of these recommendations have not been implemented. Some things have even deteriorated despite different promises.

The Dam problems:

The People's Republic of Laos wants to become the battery of Southeast Asia with the construction of dams. In addition, it promises to contribute something positive to climate change with this so-called green energy. There are, however, some facts that mock the neutral observer. Nevertheless, a large part of the population is without electricity. According to official information, this affects about 25% of the population. (Source: Worldbank) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS> . Development workers and independent NGOs expect at least 30%. The ecological risks such as the decimation of fish stocks in the rivers, as well as the formation of greenhouse gases such as Methane in stagnant water caused by the damming and much more were not taken into account. <https://www.dw.com/de/umstrittene-wasserkraft-in-laos/a-44821456> Likewise, the construction of the dam was criticized by Brian Eyler, the consultant of UNDP, with the indication of the better possibility of producing solar power. There are even economic risks to the ecological risks that were not considered. The companies that build the dams have a right of use of 25 to 30 years, only then the dams come into the possession of the Government of Laos. So there is no profit, which is invested in the development of the country. Analysts confirm that the only winners of these dam projects are the construction companies, which charge their material and work, the banks that finance the projects, and of course the corrupt officials, who receive bribes for the permits and false security certificates.

Last but not least, there are the problems that the devastating dam failures and floods in 2017 and 2018 have revealed. There is obviously no working disaster plan for such incidents. Apart from that, once again the risks for humans and the environment are shown. Much of the help for the victims has not been paid to date. Despite aid payments by the Korean dam construction companies in the amount of \$ 10 million and the government's promise to pay \$ 10,000 each to the victim families, this aid has only partially arrived. An exact statement of the ADL can be found at:

<https://www.laoalliance.org/ADL%20Statement%20on%20the%20misfortune%20of%20the%20Xe%20Pian%20Xe%20Namnoy%20project.pdf>

Since 2017, there have been 3 collapses of dams. The worst collapse was that of the Xe Pian Xe Namnoy project in the province of Attapeu in July 2018. Alone in this accident about 7,000 victims were to be lamented. The official casualties of 40 casualties must be doubted, since only those who had a passport were counted. but the majority of people in Laos have no passport. Independent journalists were hindered in coverage after a short time. So the truth was obscured. The million U\$ of international and national aid was not given directly to the population, but was controlled centrally by the authorities in the province of Attapeu. So a large part of the help did not reach the victims until today. The promised help was not kept. According to our information, the government wants paid the victims of the last catastrophe 100,000, - Lao Kip per month as compensation. This commitment was not respected. This sum is equivalent to U\$ 12, -. For the survivors of the deceased, the announced U \$ 10,000, - are too few. The shelters are unsuitable for the climate with their corrugated iron

roofs. Instead of providing new housing, banana plantations for Chinese investors were set up in the disaster area, adding to the environmental impact of their pesticides. To this day, the responsibility for this disaster is unclear. Therefore, the construction of further dams does not make sense.

Despite all these problems, Laos plans to build 100 dams until 2020. In total, 300 dams are to be built in Laos. A detailed map can be watched here:

https://www.geni.org/globalenergy/library/national_energy_grid/laos/laotiannationalelectricitygrid.shtml

Land grabs:

The land grab in Laos continues unhindered despite other government commitments. The reasons for this are on the one hand the many megaprojects in the country, but also the relocation for foreign investors, and the establishment of special economic zones. So the government has made soft land leases up to 99 years. The people who resisted this form of land grabbing were mostly arrested or threatened. So now more than 30% of the Lao land area is in the hand of foreign investors now. By lending to foreign investors, the debt of Laos rose to dizzying heights. Thus, the debt for the construction of an express train run by Chinese investors is \$ 6 billion. For the special economic zone Champasaak, city of Khong, made by the Hong Kong Investment corp., the debts amount to U \$ 9 billion. Since the foreign investors bring in the same skilled workers for their projects, the effects on the labor market for the Laotians are only small. Since the foreign investors bring in the same skilled workers for their projects, the effects on the labor market for the Laotians are only small.

The examples for land grabs are manifold: In 2017, 14 villagers from Yeub, Sekong Province have been arrested for their use of land rights. The families of the detainees protested against the expropriation of their property for the benefit of a Vietnamese plastic company by preventing the company's workers from cutting down the trees. In the meantime, one of the detainees, Mr. Somsavanh, died on 29.01.2018 under circumstances that were not completely clarified. The villagers have resisted the expropriations since 2006.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/doubt-02212018164255.html>

Concerning the report of the population of May 17 2019 to Radio Free Asia, published on May 20, 2019 about the arrested people in village Ban Dane Nhai, the city and the province Salavan, concerning the land grab of the population by a Vietnamese company.

The following has been reported: On the evening of 07.08.2011, 25 people were arrested by the authorities in the village of Ban Dane Nhai after a rally that did not lose their paddy fields to a Vietnamese company that had just surveyed the entire site for a eucalyptus tree plantation. The rice fields of the citizens of Ban Dane Nhai were also measured. The authorities arrested these 25 people and took them to Ban Naxay Prison, about 30 kilometers from Salavan City. A little later, 23 people were released. However, two people remained in detention because they were considered leaders. These are Mr. Sy Phong and Mr. Som Nuek. They were accused of being political agitators. According to our information, Mr. Sy Phong, (55), died on March 07 2019 in prison. The authorities informed the family ten days later, saying he died because of his illness (but there was no autopsy). The above mentioned situation was confirmed by the police in the village of Ban Dane Nhai, but the police denied the arrest of 25 people, arresting only 2 people, arresting them not for the land dispute but for illegal political activities. According to the authorities in the city of Salavan and the Deputy District Governor, the knowledge about the arrests is denied; at first they want to learn more about the background.

In 2019, at least 140 families from eight villages in the Khong district in the southwestern Laos province of Champasak will be forced to leave their country to make way for a special economic zone planned for their area. Despite this, developers have begun the hasty construction of an access road that would bring construction traffic dangerously close to some of the villages.

The first phase of the Mahanathy Siphandone special economic zone (SEZ) is expected to be built by 2021 and will cover nearly 200 hectares (494 acres) of land throughout the six villages. The project will be expanded to cover nearly 10,000 (24,710 acres) hectares of land in the province. But residents of Ban Hinsiu, Ban Phon, Ban Hang Khong, Ban Don Khong, Ban Muang Sen, Ban Phon Kao, Ban Thakhob, and Ban Houakhok villages have officially refused to give up their land. The district official added that the initial plan of the development will cover 3,000 hectares of land and affect eight villages. Later the development will expand to 6,000 hectares and will affect 11 more villages.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-sez-champassak-05092019173146.html>

UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston reported in April 2019 on the conditions in Laos. He rightly criticized the bad conditions in Laos.

Freedom of expression:

The decree number 327 rigorously limits the freedoms on the Internet, especially on social media. This is not compatible with the general human rights charter of the UN. But now the government of Laos goes a step further and affects the freedom of expression with another decree.

The restrictions have been implemented, despite an already existing decree of 16 September 2014. This decree strengthens the previous measures restricting expression in the social media and the Internet. It means a significant restriction in the ability of the population to find out about the real situation in the country and to exchange information on the Internet, especially about the suppression in Laos. On July 9, 2019, a conference was held under the chairmanship of Lao Vice Prime Minister, Mr. Sonesay Siphandone. At this conference it was decided to adopt the new decree as a kind of protection order to strengthen the Internet control. The measure now forces all users of the Internet to register with the authorities under the Ministry of Media, Culture and Tourism. Such a registration requirement does not exist in the free countries of the world.

From this conference, the order was issued to the local authorities, which forbid the citizens of Laos to use the Internet without restriction. Policemen and so-called village observers were instructed to monitor and track users of cell phones and frequent callers, especially those suspected of being activists against the system of the Lao People's Republic. There were formed watch groups, each monitoring a section of 2 km². In some areas even military units were sent with tanks. The units were observed by the population in the Special Economic Zone of Ton Pheung Town, Bokeo Province. Officially, there was no explanation to the population about this deployment. Population control currently covers the province of Oudomaxay in northern Laos and four provinces in southern Laos, including Attapeu Province, Champassak Province, Salavan Province and Sekong Province. We suspect that the government will extend these measures across the country.

Officially, the Laos authorities have announced that they will conduct this internet check to combat crime. In truth, however, this is just another method of oppressing the Lao population, which has only two hands as an instrument and learns the truth from the world through social media and can see the evidence of the power abuse of party and state leadership and their repressive apparatus. In contrast, the real crimes in Laos are not seriously prosecuted, either by the land-robbers who are selling the land illegally to foreign investors, or by the traffickers, drug lords or corrupt senior officials. For example, there are still many land robbers who illegally acquire the land from the people in order to then sell it to foreign investors, who in turn, despite ban a ban banana plantations, here is no serious prosecution instead.

Examples:

In 2016, the 3 bloggers, Mr. Sukane Chaythat, Miss Lodkham Thammavong, and Mr. Somphorn Phimmasone, were arrested in March 2016 and sentenced to 12, 18, and 20 years in prison for criticizing the regime on the Internet and a petition to the Government of Laos in front of the Lao Embassy in Thailand, where they were migrant workers. They were not given adequate legal assistance and were publicly humiliated on Lao state television. <http://www.laoalliance.org/wgad-requests-laos-governmen>

According to our latest information, Mr. Chaythat was offered in July 2019 an offer to reduce the penalty for payment of THB 300,000.

Mr. Bounthanh Thammavong a polish citizen and former Lao citizen has been sentenced for 5 years in prison. The authorities accused that he posted criticism of the Lao government online. Now he was released and on the right side you can see him in an interview at our TV-sender on July 1st 2019. He said that he was arrested by the police without any accusation. Thereafter, his apartment was searched and leaflets with anti-government content discovered. In addition to this, one had hacked his computer and subsequently manipulated some images to discredit Mr. Thammavong. Mr. Thammavong also had to pay an additional fine to end his prison sentence.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/lao-polish-political-prisoner-released-06212019120951.html>

It is common practice in Laos for prisoners to pay another fine at the end of their sentence. Officially it is said that prisoners would be partially charged for the costs of detention. However, this may be doubted in general, the ADL has indications that the money is more like a bribe paid to the prison staff.

Civil Rights:

The political and civil rights in Laos are severely limited by the pronounced control by Vietnam. The Lao Vietnamese Friendship Treaty of 18.07.1977, which was then closed for 25 years and renewed every 10 years, guarantees Vietnam control over the Lao People's Republic. Key officials in Laos continue to be occupied by Vietnamese, and Vietnamese advisers and superiors are still present in Laos, with an increasing trend. This also continues in the political offices. Equally progressive is the yield of natural resources by Vietnam. As we have already reported, and have now been confirmed by UN Special Rapporteur Phillip Alston, already 40% of the

land area of Laos is owned by foreign investors. The associated mega-projects, special economic zones or mining concessions have neither led to Laos having enough tax revenue nor to many jobs being created for the people of Laos. On the contrary, most of the foreign companies bring the labor force from abroad to a large extent, and the local population suffers from the relocations on much poorer estates. The government has now appealed to foreign investors to hire more workers from Laos instead of contracting it in advance. The control has also been very clear in recent times. Ho Chi Minh's statues are now appearing in several cities in the country.

<http://en.dangcongsan.vn/foreign-affairs/ho-chi-minh-city-s-delegation-visits-uncle-ho-commemorative-site-in-laos-471452.html>

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/statue-10162014150403.html>

In the last years the influence of China grows up. China got a lot of special economy zones, dam projects and more land concessions after they have been awarded the contract to build a fast train through Laos. So 55.000 Chinese settlers have come to the special economy zone Beueanthalouang, more than 200.000 settlers from China have come to the special economy zone in the city of Thonpheung, province of Bokeo. The results is that more and more Lao citizens have lost their home to the Chinese settlers.

The institutions in Laos are against the principle and spirit of the Convention on Political Rights. According to the Laos Constitution in Art.3, the Lao Revolutionary People's Party has the core leadership across the country. Thus, it is impossible for other organizations to work and exist; the same applies to other thinkers. It can be observed that the arrests of politically different thinking over long periods of time are unchanged.

Basic human rights:

The population is hindered in the exercise of their human rights. Civil rights activists but also simple inhabitants of the country disappear or are imprisoned when they stand up for their rights. This is similar in the case of Mr. Sombath Somphone. This case has led to further severe intimidation among the population. Even famous politicians have been affected. So in 1990 in the case of Thongsouk Saysankhi and his companions Feng Sakchittaphong and Latsami Khampheui, who were arrested after a critical statement in Parliament about the lack of democracy and sentenced to 14 years in prison. Thongsouk Saysankhi died in 1998 under torture in Huaphang Prison. In 2015, Bounthanh Thammavong was sentenced to prison for his criticism of the regime, and in addition he was fined. The arrest of the three bloggers, Mr. Sukane Chaythat, Miss Lodkham Thammavong, and Mr. Somphorn Phimmasone, after critical commenting without questioning the system, and the disappearance of Renowned Civil Rights activist Sombath Sophone, have created a climate of anxiety Laos taken care of. The citizens of Laos barely dare to stand up for their rights. As a result, the rule of law of the country is in danger. Decree number 218 prevents the work of NGOs in Laos. The government of Laos claims that more NGOs work today than ever before. But the fact is that neither human rights organizations nor political NGOs are allowed in Laos. Worse, regime critics are treated like criminals.

The right to quality of life is also not taken into account in Laos. Untreated sewage from factories, mostly owned by foreign investors, pollute the rivers. The massive deforestation and monocultures have transformed Laos from CO² consumer to CO² producer. Plastic waste is being disposed of wildly in the environment not only by locals, but also from Europe for some time, since then the rivers and lakes in Laos are increasingly becoming a dump. The government of Laos claims that it reforests the deforested rainforest. But the fact is that rainforests are turning into productive forests with banana plantations or rubber plantations. These plantations also pollute the environment and humans with extremely harmful pesticides.

Social problems:

The divorce rate in Laos is rising sharply. The reasons for this are profound reasons, including persistent corruption as well as the drug problem. Many men have several lovers and let their wives down. This aggravates social problems in society. Unfortunately, the state welfare in Laos is extremely poor. In family law Laos still seems to have a lot of catching up to do.

The drug incidents:

The drug police also seem to be working very inefficiently, as the reputation of Laos for the drug problem remains one of the worst. Time and again, tourists and other visitors to the country report on the ease of approaching drugs without being bothered by the police. The society in Laos is dominated by men; still in many areas the word of the man is more valid than that of the woman.

Human trafficking and slave labors:

Prostitution is part of everyday life in society. Many adolescents are lured to neighboring Thailand or other countries to work as prostitutes, often under duress. Corrupt officials in the authorities promote this development by providing those affected with fake papers to allow them to travel abroad. The reasons lie in a failed education policy and a lack of future prospects for young people. An estimated number of 600,000 young people have to share this destiny. There is also a clear need to catch up with the legal side. Although there have been new anti-trafficking laws in Laos since 2015, which include either fines, imprisonment or even the death penalty, judgments are often very lenient.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/chinese-marriage-proposals-02132017122352.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_trafficking_in_Laos

<http://www.laoalliance.org/100-000pupils>

Thus regime critics or even foreigners who express themselves critically against the regime or the authorities are sentenced to prison terms of 5 to 20 years. On the other hand, so-called tugs and other people involved in trafficking are almost exclusively fined. In the case of imprisonment, there is a premature dismissal on the grounds that there is no further risk of re-offending.

Most of the slave labors are now in Thailand, but slave labors are also inside Laos. One of the biggest example for slave labor in Laos is the case of Nikom 23. The coffee and rubber plantation under the name Nikhom 23 were built as economic unity for the party and government, (so-called Agricultural unit). But in truth, these are camps for slave labor. The people work in the rice and vegetable fields, the profit of the production must be handed over to the government. Anyone who does something against it will be arrested and killed. For foreigners it is forbidden to enter the agricultural camp. The Lao population in this area amounts to 60,000 people. For the people it is forbidden to travel to Vientiane province.

Another detail is the double tax payments by the Lao migrant workers. The migrant workers have to pay income tax in Thailand plus a lump tax per head to the Lao authorities about 2.000,-THB (US\$ 65,-)per year, officially it is 300.000,- Kip this is 1.200,- THB. The migrant workers have to pay it to the authorities by returning to their home. Most of these workers have a monthly income not more than US\$ 220,-.

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

Freedom of religion:

Time and again there is discrimination and arrests of Christians in Laos. This is all the more disturbing, because the population of Laos is mostly Buddhist and therefore very tolerant. Responsible for these cases are again and again the authorities and government offices in the country. Here are some examples:

In 2005, 27 Hmong in Bolikhamxai Province were arrested for their Christian worship. In May 2017, Luang Phrabang Province students from a Bible School and Lao Hmong are being arrested for propagating the gospel. In April 2019, three US citizens are arrested for their Christian activities. Also in 2019, we were told that in the province of Attapeu Christians were driven out of their homes, who are now homeless. In addition, officials were dismissed for their Christian beliefs. The officials did not receive either their discharge papers or a certificate.

Office in Germany: **Dr. Bounthone Chanthavong- Wiese**, President, Letmather Str.71, 58119 Hagen, Germany
Phone& Fax: +49-2334-44 44 668, Email: chanthalavong@aol.com

USA: **Ms.Khamphene Souvannasane**, Vice-President, 3837 Rusty Dell St.Fortworth,TX 76111
Phone:+1-682- 554- 6675 ,Email:khamhe@yahoo.com

Australia: **Mr.Khampheo Lathamany**, Vice-President, 53 McIntyre Drive,Altona Vic., Australia
Tel.:+61-3-9398 45 42,cell: 61-4-04169927, Email: ksithandone@hotmail.com

Canada: **Mr.Kambane Anonthisen**, Vice-President, 84 Highgatz Rord Kichener ,ONT, Tel. cell: 519-58 80 502,
email: khambane@hotmail.com

France: **Mr.Sovath Thongsavat** Vice-President , ADL Fr. , 1 chemin du bief 01230 Tenay, France, Tel.+33-4-74 36
56 44, or +33- 6-63 99 42 09, Email: thinan.t@laposte.net

New Zealand: **Mr.Touy Manikham** Vice-President, 1 The Anchorage Whitby ,Wellington 5024, NZ, Tel.: +64-4-234
1535, Email: touy.manikham@gmail.com