

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Date Index: 01 October 2020

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC: HUMAN RIGHTS DENIED

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OUTCOME ON LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Amnesty International welcomes the discussion of human rights in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). We regret that the state did not accept recommendations on steps to abolish the death penalty; to ratify all international human rights treaties and protocols; to take specific measures to investigate grave human rights violations including cases of enforced disappearance and torture in the country; to establish a National Human Rights Commission; and to amend legislation to protect peaceful exercise of rights.

We note Lao PDR's stated commitment to improving human rights protection in the country. We welcome Laos' undertaking to ratify the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and urge that this be done without reservations. We regret that Lao PDR has still to implement recommendations it has supported at the previous UPR, including on impunity for the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone and treaty ratification.

We regret Lao PDR did not accept recommendations on investigating the situation of missing Thai pro-democracy activists and Lao political activists who are feared to have been subjected to enforced disappearances.

We welcome the state's undertaking to release those detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Despite the delegation's assertions at the UPR review that the state protects these rights, men and women are still imprisoned and continue to be arbitrarily detained for their peaceful exercise. This includes individuals who have spoken out to defend their rights online, who have criticised officials, or who have taken part in peaceful assemblies.

We also welcome Lao PDR's support for recommendations on observance of international standards on land acquisition and displacement. Communities displaced by state land acquisition continue to report that they were not adequately consulted or compensated and have suffered damage to their livelihoods and to their environment.

BACKGROUND

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Lao People's Democratic Republic on 28 September 2020 during its 45th session. The above text is Amnesty International's statement on the outcome prior to the adoption of the report of the review. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the UPR review through its submission on Lao PDR (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa26/1024/2019/en/>).