

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 26/07/00

15 June 2000

Further information on UA 150/00 (ASA 26/06/00, 7 June 2000) - Fear of Torture

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (LAOS) One person, name unknown, arrested 7 June 2000

Another person, name unknown

Two people are now known to have been arrested near the Morning Market in Vientiane on or after 7 June 2000 on suspicion of involvement in a bomb attack on a bus on 6 June. An official from the Ministry of Interior is reported to have confirmed that the two people are in detention, without identifying them by name.

Amnesty International has reliable reports of widespread torture and ill-treatment in police custody and prisons in Laos and believes these two detainees are at serious risk.

Since March 2000, as many as five bomb explosions have been reported in Vientiane, the Laotian capital. The Lao authorities have announced that new security measures will be put in place, especially in areas popular with tourists.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The only legal political party in Laos is the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the communist party which controls the government. The Lao government greatly restricts the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Opposition to the government is not permitted, even in the form of peaceful public meetings. The state retains control of institutions such as the media, religious organizations and trade unions. There are no independent domestic non-governmental organizations in Laos and international human rights monitors are not allowed access to the country. In October 1999 a group of at least five people attempting to hold a public protest were arrested. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/ airmail letters in Lao, English or French or in your own language:

- appealing to the Lao authorities to ensure that the two people arrested on or after 7 June 2000 on suspicion of involvement in a bomb attack on 6 June 2000 are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment in police custody;
- urging that the suspects be allowed access to family members, medical personnel and legal assistance;
- recognizing the threat to public security posed by the recent bomb attacks in Laos, but emphasizing that fundamental human rights of detainees must be upheld;
- asking to be kept informed of any developments in the case.

APPEALS TO:

Sisavath Keobounphanh
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Vientiane
Laos

Fax: +856 21 213 650

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Vientiane, Laos

Salutation:Your Excellency

Somsavat Lengsavat
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Vientiane
Laos

Fax: +856 21 414 009

Salutation:Your Excellency

Major General Asang Laoli
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Vientiane
Laos

Telegrams:Interior Minister, Vientiane, Laos

Salutation:Dear Major General

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) accredited to your country.

PLEASE NOTE THAT FAX LINES TO LAOS ARE HIGHLY UNRELIABLE. THESE FAX NUMBERS WERE FUNCTIONING ON 15 JUNE 2000.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 July 2000.