

AI INDEX: ASA 26/08/98

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 HRS 27 MAY 1998

MEDIA ADVISORY

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Prisoners of Conscience left to die

Amnesty International is releasing a report today to highlight the plight of two prisoners of conscience in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, who desperately need medical care. A third prisoner, Thongsouk Saysangkhi, died in February 1998 in the remote prison camp where all three were detained.

Since their detention in 1990 Amnesty International and concerned governments have made repeated appeals to the Lao authorities to improve the conditions of detention of the prisoners. These appeals have been ignored, resulting in the tragic death of one of the prisoners, far from his family and without any medical care.

That Thongsouk Saysangkhi should have been allowed to die and his fellow prisoners left in such critical conditions in the face of these many expressions of concern highlights not only the Lao Government's complete lack of care of its political prisoners, but its contempt for the opinion of the international community. Amnesty International's new document includes letters from the prisoners, in which they make desperate calls for assistance.

In the light of the death of Thongsouk Saysangkhi, Amnesty International renews its appeal to the Lao authorities:

- to free Feng Sakchittapong and Latsami Khamphoui immediately and unconditionally;
- to allow them immediate access to medical treatment;
- to ensure that they and their families, and the family of Thongsouk Saysangkhi, are not subjected to discrimination or harassment from the authorities.

For further information, please refer to Amnesty International's report *Lao People's Democratic Republic: Prisoners of Conscience left to die* (ASA 26/07/98) or contact the research team: +44 171 413 5908 or the Press Office: +44 171 413 5566.