

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: ASA 26/009/2003**

**2 July 2003**

**Further Information on UA 165/03 (ASA 26/004/2003, 11 June 2003) and follow-up (ASA 26/007/2003, 25 June 2003) - Fear of torture/fear for safety**

**LAO PEOPLE'S  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

**Pastor Naw Karl Mua (m), ethnic Hmong, US national  
Thierry Falise (m), Belgian national  
Vincent Reynaud (m), French national  
Pa Fue Khang (m), ethnic Hmong, Lao national  
Other Lao nationals (names and number unknown)**

**New names:**

**Thao Moua (m), 27, ethnic Hmong, Lao national  
Char Yang (m), ethnic Hmong, Lao national**

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On 30 June, Pastor Naw Karl Mua, Thierry Falise and Vincent Reynaud were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by a court in Phonsavan, the capital of Xieng Khouang province in northeast Laos. Pa Fue Khang, their driver, was also sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, and their guides Thao Moua and Char Yang to 12 years' and 20 years' imprisonment respectively. Doubt still surrounds the exact number and identities of all the Lao nationals detained.

Their trial lasted only two hours, and was not open to the public or foreign journalists. However, the French and US Ambassadors were allowed into the court room. The exact charges against those tried remains unclear. All the men have 15 days in which to appeal against their sentences.

Before they were moved to Phonsavan, the detainees were being held at an unknown location in the capital Vientiane. It is not known where they are currently being held. Concerns remain about the conditions under which they are held, and there are fears in particular that those detained from the Hmong ethnic group are at grave risk of torture and ill-treatment.

The Lao nationals, three of whom are known to be ethnic Hmong, were guides accompanying two European journalists and an ethnic Hmong pastor with US nationality, who were researching a story on a group of ethnic Hmong rebels. They were all arrested by local security officials on 4 June in Xieng Khouang province, and transferred to Vientiane. They were reportedly accused of involvement in the death of a security official.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:**

- expressing concern that Pastor Naw Karl Mua, Thierry Falise, Vincent Reynaud, Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua and Char Yang were given lengthy prison sentences after a trial which did not meet international standards of fairness;
- expressing grave concern for the safety of Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua, Char Yang and any other Lao nationals detained;
- urging the authorities to make public the exact number and identity of all the Lao nationals arrested in connection with this incident;
- urging the authorities to make public the whereabouts of all those detained, and to ensure that they will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling on the authorities to give all the detainees immediate access to lawyers, relatives, and any necessary medical treatment;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained if they are held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association.

**APPEALS TO:**

Bounyang Vorachit

Prime Minister

Office of the Prime Minister

Rue Sisavat

Vientiane

Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Telegram: Prime Minister, Vientiane, Laos**

**Fax: + 856 21 212408 (c/o Ministry of Information)**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Somsavat Lengsavat

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

That Luang

Vientiane

Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Telegram: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vientiane, Laos**

**Fax: + 856 21 414009**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:** Diplomatic representatives of Lao People's Democratic Republic accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 August 2003.