

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 26/03/97

UA 404/97 Health Concern / Prisoners of conscience

22 December 1997

LAOSThongsouk Saysangkhi

Latsami Khamphoui

Feng Sakchittaphong

Three prisoners of conscience, detained since October 1990, are seriously ill and need immediate medical treatment. Amnesty International fears that if they do not receive appropriate medical treatment in hospital, the three prisoners of conscience will not survive.

Thongsouk Saysangkhi, Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong are detained in a prison camp in a remote area of Laos, to which access is very difficult.

There are no medical facilities in the prison camp, and their conditions of detention are extremely harsh and fall far short of international minimum standards for the treatment of detainees. Recent calls for help from the three prisoners indicate that they are all gravely ill and urgently require medical treatment. All three men are known to have suffered from serious medical conditions throughout their detention, made worse by the harsh environment in which they are held. They have been denied the adequate medical care that they need, and their health has seriously deteriorated. Latsami Khamphoui has angina; Thongsouk Saysangkhi and Feng Sakchittaphong are suffering from a variety of illnesses including kidney problems, diabetes, and intestinal problems. Medicines recently sent to the three prisoners have not been received by them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thongsouk Saysangkhi, Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong are former government officials who were arrested in October 1990 for writing letters advocating peaceful political and economic change in Laos. They were tried in a grossly unfair trial in November 1992 on various charges including "preparations for a rebellion", "propaganda against the Lao People's Democratic Republic" and "libel and slander". They were sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. All three have been adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International.

Family visits to the men have been severely restricted. At one point, no visits were allowed for almost two years. The men are allowed no reading or writing material, and at various times have been held in small cold cells with no beds, forbidden to talk to each other, allowed out of their cells only once a fortnight to bathe, and have been threatened with beatings by prison guards.

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

- calling for immediate medical treatment and hospitalization for Thongsouk Saysangkhi, Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong;
- urging the authorities to take any steps they can to alleviate the conditions of these prisoners of conscience who may not survive their current situation, as a humanitarian gesture;
- urging that all three prisoners of conscience be immediately and unconditionally released .

APPEALS TO:

Khamtai Siphandone

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Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Vientiane
Laos

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Vientiane, Laos

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Vientiane, Laos

Salutation: Dear Major General

Governor Somphanh Phengkhammy
Sam Neua
Houa Phanh Province
Laos

Telegrams: Governor Somphanh Phengkhammy, Sam Neua, Houa Phanh, Laos

Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Laos accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 February 1998.