

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 26/011/2003

09 July 2003

Further Information on UA 165/03 (ASA 26/004/2003, 11 June 2003) and follow-ups (ASA 26/007/2003, 25 June 2003 and ASA 26/009/2003, 2 July 2003) – Fear of torture/Fear for safety New concern: Unfair trial

**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), 33, ethnic Hmong, Lao national
Thao Moua (m), 27, ethnic Hmong, Lao national
Char Yang (m), 32, ethnic Hmong, Lao national
Other Lao nationals (names and number unknown)**

On 9 July, Pastor Naw Karl Mua, Thierry Falise and Vincent Reynaud were released from prison, escorted to Vientiane airport, and flown from Laos to neighbouring Thailand. Their release followed negotiations between foreign diplomats from the USA, Belgium and France and the Lao government. All had been serving 15-year prison sentences, imposed after an unfair trial on 30 June.

However, there is increasing concern for the fate of the Lao nationals who had been assisting the foreign journalists in reporting on the long-running internal armed conflict in Laos, and who remain in detention. According to reliable accounts, Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua, Char Yang were beaten with sticks and bicycle chains by police after their arrest, and one of the men was repeatedly knocked unconscious. All were reportedly shackled in leg irons.

Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua and Char Yang were arrested with an unknown number of other Lao nationals around 4 June in Xieng Khouang province. Despite initially being accused of involvement in the death of a security official, during their trial on 30 June they were instead charged with “obstructing an official”, “collaboration in the commission of an offence”, “possession of firearms and explosives”, “possession of drugs”, “destruction of evidence” and “attempting to flee”, according to an official media report. Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua and Char Yang were sentenced to 15, 12 and 20 years imprisonment respectively. Unlike the three foreigners, none of the Lao nationals had legal representation, and it is not known if they will be allowed to appeal against their sentences.

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

- welcoming the release of Naw Karl Mua, Thierry Falise and Vincent Reynaud on 9 July;
- expressing grave concern at the reported torture of the ethnic Hmong Lao nationals;
- urging the authorities to make public the whereabouts of all those detained, and to ensure that they will not be further tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling on the authorities to give all those arrested immediate access to lawyers, relatives, and medical treatment;
- expressing concern that Pa Fue Khang, Thao Moua and Char Yang were given lengthy prison sentences without any legal representation after a trial which did not meet international standards of fairness;
- 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 20 August 2003.