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

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Amnesty International fears for the safety of one person reportedly arrested today in the Laotian capital, Vientiane, on suspicion of involvement in a bomb attack on a bus on 6 June 2000, in which two people died. Information about the individual and the arrest is scarce, but *Agence France Presse* report that the person was arrested at the Vientiane Morning Market. Amnesty International has reliable reports of widespread torture and ill-treatment in police custody and prisons in Laos and believes this detainee is at serious risk.

Since March 2000, as many as six bomb explosions have been reported in Laos, all but one in Vientiane. The Lao authorities have recently admitted that bomb blasts have occurred, and announced that new security measures would be put in place, especially in areas popular with tourists. It is not known who is behind the attacks and whether there is a political motive.

#### **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. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has not signed or ratified several key international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). In October 1999 a group of at least five people attempting to hold a public protest were arrested. Their fate and whereabouts remains unknown.

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

- appealing to the Lao authorities to ensure that the person arrested on 7 June 2000 on suspicion of involvement in a bomb attack on 6 June 2000 is not subjected to torture or ill-treatment in police custody;
- urging that the suspect be allowed access to family members, medical personnel and legal assistance;
- recognising the threat to public security posed by the recent bomb attacks in Laos, but emphasising 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

**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 7 JUNE 2000.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 July 2000.