

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: ASA 26/006/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 143
17 June 2003

Laos: Charges and whereabouts of the detained Laotians must be made public

Amnesty International is increasingly concerned for the safety of four Lao nationals arrested by local security officials on 4 June 2003 in Xieng Khouang province. The four were accompanying three foreigners - two European journalists and an ethnic Hmong pastor - who were researching a story on a group of ethnic Hmong rebels, and who were arrested at the same time.

"We welcome the fact that French photographer Vincent Reynaud, Belgian journalist Thierry Falise, and US national Naw Karl Mua were finally allowed their first consular visits on 15 and 16 June," Amnesty International said.

"However, we are calling on the Lao authorities to immediately make public the names and whereabouts of the four Lao nationals, and to give assurances that they will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention. The four must be given access to a lawyer, their families, and to medical treatment."

Amnesty International is extremely concerned by the bellicose nature of remarks made by Lao government officials regarding the alleged incident in early June. The Foreign Minister was quoted as saying that the detained were not treated as journalists but for their alleged involvement in the death of a security officer.

"Any legal charges made against all those arrested must be made public," Amnesty International emphasized.

Public Document

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