

PUBLIC

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Southeast Asia Team
Date: 1 April 1999

Further information on

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Latsami Khamphoui / Feng Sakchittaphong
LAOS**

**[also see AI Index: ASA 26/12/98, 15 October 1998,
and ASA 26/05/93, 30 November 1993]**

Theme: POCs / ill-health / access to medical care

Summary

On 15 October 1998, Amnesty International issued a medical letter writing action on Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong following reports that the men were seriously ill and that two other prisoners held in the same prison had died earlier that year.

Amnesty International has still not received any assurances from the Lao authorities that Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong are being provided with adequate medical care, and fears that the men's health continues to deteriorate due to the harsh conditions in which they are being held. The organization is urging the government of Laos to immediately and unconditionally release Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong as prisoners of conscience, and is renewing its calls on the Lao authorities to provide the men with access to the medical care they urgently need while they remain in detention.

Background

Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong were arrested in late 1990 and sentenced in November 1992 to 14 years' imprisonment for criticising the Lao Government and advocating political and economic reform in Laos. Both were denied any access to a defence lawyer during their trial. The men are being held in extremely harsh conditions at Prison Camp 7 in a remote mountainous area of Houa Phan Province in Laos, near the Vietnamese border, which does not have any medical facilities.

Thongsouk Saysangkhi, a former government minister who was arrested and sentenced together with the two men, died in February 1998 after being seriously ill for several months without being given access to the medical care he needed. He had suffered from various ailments throughout his detention, for which he did not receive adequate medical treatment. Another death in Prison Camp 7 was reported in summer 1998.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below:

- o introducing yourself as a member of Amnesty International's health professional network and referring to your earlier letters on Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong
- o calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong as prisoners of conscience who were sentenced in an unfair trial and are being held solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs
- o urging the Lao government to provide information on the current state of health of the two men
- o asking for details of whatever medical care they are currently receiving and calling on the authorities to transfer them to hospital if necessary

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response. Please send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat [attn: medical team] and check with your national coordinator or the medical team if you wish to send appeals more than three months after the action has been issued.

ADDRESSES

His Excellency Khamtay Siphandone
President
Office of the President
Vientiane
Laos
Salutation: Your Excellency

Major General Asang Laoli
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Vientiane
Laos
Salutation: Dear Major General

His Excellency Sisavath Keobounphanh
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
Vientiane
Laos
Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor Somphanh Phangkhammy
Sam Neua
Houa Phanh Province
Laos
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES:

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2 College Road #02-00
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and to diplomatic representatives of Laos accredited to your country or the nearest Lao embassy.