

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 26/12/98

Distrib: PG/SC

To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office /Southeast Asia Subregional Team
Date: 15 October 1998

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Latsami Khamphoui
Feng Sakchittaphong
LAOS**

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

Summary

Amnesty International has again received reports that Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong who are being held in extremely harsh conditions at Prison Camp 7 in a remote area of Houa Phan Province in Laos are suffering serious health problems and are not being provided with adequate medical care. These reports follow as yet unconfirmed information that another prisoner held in the same prison died in June or July this year.

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong as prisoners of conscience, pending which they should urgently be transferred to a hospital where they can be provided with adequate medical care.

Recommended Actions

Appeals are requested from health professionals to the addresses below:

- C introducing yourself as a health professional concerned about Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong
- C stating that Amnesty International considers Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong prisoners of conscience, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release
- C expressing serious concern at reports that both men continue to suffer from serious health problems
- C seeking more information on their current state of health and asking for details on whatever medical care they are currently receiving
- C asking for their urgent transfer to a hospital where they can be provided with adequate medical care in accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners [Article 22]

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 check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 27 November, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

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 Phan Province
Laos
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO

Medical Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Secretariat c/o SMA
2 College Road #02-00
Alumni Medical Centre
Singapore 169850
Tel: +65 223-1264
Fax: +65 224-7827
Email: masean@masean.org

Please send copies of your letters to diplomatic representatives of Laos accredited to your country.

'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression'
Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Amnesty International has again received reports that Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong who are being held in extremely harsh conditions at Prison Camp 7 in a remote area of Houa Phan Province in Laos are suffering serious health problems and are not being provided with adequate medical care. AI has adopted them as prisoners of conscience in 1990 and has appealed on behalf of these prisoners in 1997 following reports of their ill health. The reports received now follow as yet unconfirmed information that another prisoner held at Prison Camp 7 died in June or July this year.

Many appeals have been made in the past by Amnesty International and others regarding the ill-health of some prisoners in Laos and the reported lack of medical care in the country's prisons. Thongsouk Saysangkhi, who was arrested together with Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong in 1990 and subsequently held in the same prison camp, died in mid-February 1998 after reportedly having been in ill-health for several months without being given access to the medical care he needed.

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong, and is calling for them to be transferred to a hospital as a matter of urgency where they can be provided with adequate medical care.

Background information

Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong have been detained since October 1990 and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment following a grossly unfair trial in 1992 on charges including making 'preparations for a rebellion', 'propaganda against the Lao People's Democratic Republic' [which was established in 1976 following the communist victory over Royalist forces], and 'libel and slander'. The men, former government officials, had advocated peaceful political and economic change in Laos.

Amnesty International has repeatedly asked the Lao authorities for information concerning the condition of these two prisoners. Latsami Khamphoui reportedly has angina and Feng Sakchittaphong suffers from a variety of illnesses including kidney problems and intestinal problems. However no detailed information on their state of health and the medical care that they are receiving has been forthcoming from the authorities. Prison Camp 7 where the men are being held is in a very remote area of Houa Phan Province in Laos and does not have any medical facilities. Especially following the death of Thongsouk Saysangkhi in February 1998 and the reports of another death in June or July this year, Amnesty International holds fears for the well-being of Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong and is seeking their immediate transfer from prison to a hospital where they can get adequate medical care, and their unconditional release from custody.

Other actions on the cases of Latsami Khamphoui and Feng Sakchittaphong:

ASA 26/11/98 29 September 1998

Further information on UA 404/97 [ASA 26/03/97]

ASA 26/05/98 10 March 1998

Further information on UA 404/97 [ASA 26/03/97]

ASA 26/03/97 22 December 1997
ASA 26/05/93 30 November 1997

UA 404/97
Medical Letter Writing Action