

Laos: Shui-Meng Describes Pain of Sombath's Disappearance, Hope of the Sombath Initiative

Thursday 11 December 2014, by [Focus on the Global South](#), [Ng Shui Meng](#) (Date first published: 11 December 2014).

Bangkok, 11 December 2014 - Ng Shui-Meng, the wife of prominent Lao civil society member Sombath Somphone, who was abducted two years ago in what is widely considered a case of enforced disappearance, spoke at a press conference this morning at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand. She described her continuing anguish and expressed appreciation for the newly formed Sombath Initiative [1] and its mission to carry forth her husband's ideas and solve the case of his disappearance, which the Lao government failed to fully investigate.

"It is important for me know that Sombath's disappearance has not been forgotten," Shui-Meng said. "Today marks the 726th day, just four days short of the day that Sombath was taken from me and my family. Even after 726 days, the shock, the pain, the anguish have not lessened. Working with the Sombath Initiative will hopefully help me deal with my loss and pain in a productive way. It is not that the pain will go away, it never will, but it will help me deal with it."

Shui-Meng was joined at the press conference by three other speakers: Angkhana Neelapajit, wife of disappeared Thai human rights lawyer Somchai Neelaphajit; Sam Zarifi of the International Commission of Jurists; and Matilda Bogner, Southeast Asia representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Sam Zarifi said that international experts have described Sombath's case as "eminently solvable," as detailed in a new report by the International Commission of Jurists [2], which describes the Lao government's failure to investigate.

For her part, Matilda Bogner pointed out the disastrous implications of this case for Laos, saying: "Civil society has operated under difficult conditions for many years, but the disappearance of Sombath Somphone has made that even harder... it sent a frightening message to civil society."

Enforced disappearance, Angkhana Neelapajit pointed out, is also a problem in other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, where 81 cases have been documented.

"I have been through many things in my life: sorrow, disappointment and hardship, but none of them have required such extensive use of intelligence and patience as this case," she said, speaking about her own husband's disappearance in 2004. The Sombath Initiative, Neelapajit added, is an important solidarity effort. Its goals are to solve the case of Sombath's disappearance, and to sustain his ideals regarding peace and civil society participation in issues of development. Members of the advisory board include Congressman Walden Bello of the Philippines, Paul-Emile Dupret of the European United Left, Malaysian MP Charles Santiago, Murray Heibert of the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Australian Senator Lee Rhiannon.

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<http://focusweb.org/content/shui-meng-describes-pain-sombath-s-disappearance-hope-sombath-initiative>

* More information about the Sombath Initiative is available on twitter and Facebook.

Footnotes

[1] See on ESSF (article 33799), [Sombath Initiative Created - Two years after the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone in Laos.](#)

[2] See on ESSF (article 33800), [Laos: Sombath's "disappearance" must be properly investigate!.](#)