

Sombath Somphone's birthday - A letter four years after he "disappeared" in Laos

Monday 20 February 2017, by [Ng Shui Meng](#) (Date first published: 17 February 2017).

Dear Friends,

Today is Sombath Somphone's birthday. Ng Shuimeng, his wife, wrote a letter posted on below

Please share widely by email and social media.

My dearest Sombath,

Today, February 17, is your birthday. If you have not been disappeared, we should be celebrating your 65th birthday today, and you should be enjoying this day surrounded by your family and friends. Even though I don't know where you are, I still want to send you all my love and prayers for a very happy birthday.

At this time of our life, you and I should be enjoying a quieter and more restful life together. I remembered so well what you told me shortly before you were snatched away that fateful night of 15 December 2012, more than 4 years ago. You told me that you really looked forward to your retirement and to spending more time working in the garden growing our own vegetables and fruit. You also told me that what you really want to do is to spend time reading and writing. You said that you needed time to organize your notes, your photos, and the bits and pieces of writing here and there you have started, but never quite had time to finish. I remembered how I had laughed and said "Yes, you should do that before the termites make a feast of your lifework!"

Indeed, after your abduction, we tried to retrieve all the notebooks, and pieces of paper you have left in the PADETC office and at home, and we found that the termites did destroy quite a few of your files and papers. But there are still many files and folders that are quite intact.

Dearest Sombath, we have kept what we could save from the termites and they all still awaiting your return. You have spent so many years working so closely with so many Lao communities, and you have gained so much knowledge and perspectives on so many aspects of development that I am sure you will have a lot to share on issues ranging from sustainable development, appropriate education, indigenous wisdom, and engaged buddhism. Your insights and vision would most certainly benefit many people in Laos, in and outside the development community. You will especially have a lot to share with the young people of Laos, who you truly love and care so much about. You have always involved the young people of Laos in all aspects of your work, as you feel that their engagement and their creativity and ideas are so necessary for the shaping of the country's development. Sombath, so many young Lao people continue to remember you and wish that you will come back soon.

Sombath, I hope that wherever you are, you will continue to use your wisdom and knowledge to benefit those around you. Knowing you, I truly believe that you will know how to survive and how to make the best of your situation. You have a great natural ability to work with people around you, and you are always able to bring out the best in people no matter who they are.

So, my love, on this day, I wish you "Happy Birthday" and I pray that you are healthy and happy. I also pray that you will come back soon so that we can celebrate your next birthday together.

Love you always, Shui Meng

P.S.

* <http://www.sombath.org/en/2017/02/dear-sombath-from-shui-meng-12/>