

# **Laos: Six Years On, Civil Society Worldwide Demands Answers to the Enforced Disappearance of Sombath Somphone**

Friday 14 December 2018, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 14 December 2018).



14 December 2018: On the eve of the sixth anniversary of the enforced disappearance of Lao civil society leader Sombath Somphone, we, the undersigned organizations, reiterate our calls for the Lao government to conduct an independent, impartial and effective investigation to reveal his fate and whereabouts.

Sombath was last seen at a police checkpoint on a busy street of the Lao capital, Vientiane, on the evening of 15 December 2012. Footage from a CCTV camera showed that Sombath's vehicle was stopped at the police checkpoint and, within minutes, individuals forced him into another vehicle and drove him away in the presence of police officers. CCTV footage also showed an unknown individual driving Sombath's vehicle away from the city center. The fact that police officers were present at and witnessed Sombath's abduction and failed to intervene strongly indicates state agents' involvement in, or acquiescence to, human rights violations committed against Sombath, which include the crime of enforced disappearance. Later that evening, witnesses reportedly saw Sombath at a police holding facility in Vientiane yet to date officials have provided no information about what he was doing there and subsequently what happened to him.

For the last six years, the Lao government has failed to provide any credible answers with regard to the disappearance of Sombath Somphone. In its most recent pronouncements, made during the review of Laos' initial report by the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) in July 2018, the Lao government said it had been "trying very hard" to investigate Sombath's fate and whereabouts. However, this statement has been contradicted by the government's refusal to accept international assistance in conducting the investigation and to provide any details about the progress of its investigation. Lao authorities have failed to disclose any new findings from their investigation of Sombath's case to the public since 8 June 2013 and have met with his wife, Shui Meng Ng, only twice since January 2013.

Despite the government's recent claim that police had the "capacity and techniques" to reveal Sombath's fate and whereabouts, we remain extremely concerned by the lack of progress in the investigation by Lao authorities into his case and reiterate our call for Vientiane to allow international assistance towards conducting an independent, impartial and thorough investigation according to international law and standards.

The Lao authorities have international legal obligations to conduct such investigations and to bring

persons responsible for serious violations to justice under treaties to which they are party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.

We also urge the Lao government to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which Laos signed in September 2008, to incorporate the Convention's provisions into the country's domestic legislation, and implement it in practice.

Until Sombath Somphone's fate and whereabouts are revealed, we will not stop demanding that Sombath be safely returned to his family and we will continue to ask the Lao government: "Where is Sombath?"

## **107 organizations**

11.11.11 Belgium

Action from Ireland (Afri)

Addison Road Community Centre Organisation (ARCCO)

All India women Hawker Federation

Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma)

Amnesty International

Armanshahr/OPEN ASIA

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)

Asia Pacific Movement for Debt and Development (APMDD)

Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia)

Attac France

Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED)

Bank Information Center

Borneo Dayak Forum International

Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino - BMP (Workers Solidarity Philippines)

Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)

Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)

CCFD-Terre Solidaire

Centre for Environmental Justice

China Labour Bulletin

Christian Development Alternative (CDA)

CLEAN (Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network)

CNCD-11.11.11

Coalition against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific

Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS)

Community Action Network (CAN)

Community Resource Centre Foundation (CRC)

Corner House

EarthRights International

Ecologistas en Acción

Environics Trust

Equitable Cambodia

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF)

Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND)

FIAN International

FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights

Finnish Asiatic Society

Focus on the Global South  
Fresh Eyes — People to People Travel CIC  
Function 8  
Fundacion Solón  
Global Justice Now  
Human Rights Commission Pakistan (HRCP)  
Human Rights in China (HRIC)  
Human Rights Watch  
Indian Social Action Forum - INSAF  
International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED)  
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)  
International Peace Bureau  
International Rivers  
Internet Law Reform Dialogue (iLaw)  
Jagaran Nepal  
KATARUNGAN (Kilusan para sa Repormang Agraryo at Katarungang Panlipunan)  
Kesatuan Nelayan Traditional (KNT)  
Keshav Gore Smarak Trust  
KRuHA - People's Coalition for The Right To Water  
Labour Education Foundation  
Land Watch Thai  
League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI)  
Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center—Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth  
LILAK (Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights)  
Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture (MADPET)  
Maldivian Democracy Network  
Manushya Foundation  
MARUAH  
Migrant Forum in Asia  
National Hawker Federation  
Network for Transformative Social Protection  
New Trade Union Initiative  
NGO Forum on ADB  
Nomadic Livestock Keepers' Development Public Fund (NLKDF)  
Nouveaux Cahiers du Socialism  
Odhikar  
Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union  
Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee  
Participatory Research Action Network- PRAN  
Peace Union of Finland  
People's Health Movement  
People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy(PSPD)  
People's Watch  
Progressive Labour Federation  
Progressive Voice  
Project SEVANA South-East Asia  
Project X  
Resonant Strategic  
Rural Poor Institute for Land and Human Rights Services, Inc. (RIGHTS, Inc.)  
Solidarité des Jeunes Lao  
South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)

Stiftung Asienhauses  
Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)  
Sustainability and Participation through Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL)  
Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR)  
Tameer Nau Women Workers Association  
Thilak Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka Nature Group  
Think Centre  
Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis  
Transnational Institute  
Ulu Foundation  
Union Syndicale Solidaires  
Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR)  
Woman Health Philippines  
Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB)  
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)  
World Rainforest Movement  
York Psychotherapy Centre

## **Individuals**

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Edeliza P. Hernandez, Philippines.  
Elenita Daño, Philippines  
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Kirsten Han, Singapore  
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<https://focusweb.org/content/laos-six-years-civil-society-worldwide-demands-answers-enforced-disappearance-sombath>

<https://www.sombath.org/en/2018/12/six-years-on-civil-society-worldwide-demands-answers-to-the-enforced-disappearance-of-sombath-somphone/>