

## Laos' Secret Jails, Camps: Minnesota Hmong Appeal for Families, US Citizens Jailed in Gulag

*Minnesota Twin Cities' Hmong families are appealing for the release of their relatives held in secret prisons and camps in Laos.*

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Minnesota Twin Cities' Hmong families have joined others from California, Wisconsin and other states in appealing for the release of their relatives held in a network of secret prisons and camps in various provinces in Laos. The Center for Public Policy Analysis (CPPA) in Washington, D.C. has uncovered additional information about the secret prisons and clandestine gulag system in Laos that has been confirmed by Australian human rights advocates, journalists and others.

"Thousands of Lao Hmong refugees, and many political and religious prisoners, including Lao student leaders, are being held in secret prisons and detention camps in Laos that are part of a nation-wide network in various provinces," said Philip Smith, Executive Director of the CPPA in Washington, D.C.

"Three Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul, Minnesota, including Mr. Hakit Yang, also continue to be jailed in a secret prison complex in Sam Neua Province according to reliable sources; significant numbers of the Laotian and Hmong prisoners and refugees have disappeared or have suffered beatings, torture and abuse in recent years, including known cases of summary executions in 2007-2009," Smith concluded.

Over 4500 Hmong political refugees and asylum seekers were recently forcibly repatriated from Thailand to Laos. Over 8,000 Hmong were forced from Thailand back to Laos from 2007-09 by the Thai military.

"As a Hmong-American, and the wife of Hakit Yang, I still have not received concrete answers from the Lao government about the arrest and disappearance of my husband; He is still imprisoned in Laos since 2007 with his two Hmong citizen colleagues from St. Paul, Minnesota," said Mrs. Sheng Xiong wife of Hakit Yang.

<http://www.live-pr.com/en/secret-prisons-in-laos-hold-hakit-r1048311013.htm>

Hakit Yang and two other Hmong-American citizens from St. Paul were arrested by Lao military and security forces in August of 2007 and later imprisoned in Vientiane's notorious Phonthong Prison before their transfer to Sam Neua Province.

"We are requesting and respectfully ask for the Lao government to immediately provide access to my husband for visitation by our family and release Hakit Yang and the other American citizens from St. Paul that they have held for nearly three years without charges or due process," continued Mrs. Sheng Xiong.

Mrs. Xiong is the spokesperson three Hmong-American families that continue to seek to visit their family members arrested and imprisoned in Laos. [http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1096024.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1096024.html)  
[http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1082702.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1082702.html)

Mr. Hakit Yang, Congshineng Yang, and Trillion Yunhaison, all Hmong-American citizens from the Twin Cities in Minnesota, were arrested and imprisoned by Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (LPDR) military

and security forces in August of 2007 after traveling from St. Paul as tourists seeking potential business investment opportunities in Laos.

During a visit to the United States, Australian Kay Danes revealed details of the continued imprisonment of the three American citizens in Laos in a secret prison in Laos' Sam Nuea Province. Danes and Mrs. Xiong were keynote speakers at a policy conference in Washington, D.C. held in the spring of 2009 in the U.S. Congress and National Press Club. [http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1089564.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1089564.html)  
[http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1089561.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1089561.html)

"I would like to raise my continued growing concerns for the three U.S. Citizens that went missing in Laos August 25th, 2007, following arrest," said Kay Danes, Advocate, with the Foreign Prisoner Support Service (FPSS). "These men have not returned to the United States, to their families."

Mrs. Danes and her husband were jailed in Laos in brutal conditions as political prisoners by the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (LPDR). Danes is the author of the book "Standing Ground" that details torture and horrific conditions in Lao prisons and detention centers. [http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1088730.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1088730.html)

"Over the last three years, political analysts have painstakingly documented evidence that supports the ongoing persecution of Lao Hmong and Political Prisoners in secret detention centres throughout Laos. It is a broadly accepted view held by the International Community that the Lao Hmong Refugees will face similar persecution, arbitrary detention, torture, and possibly death, if forced back to Laos. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Foreign Prisoner Support Service have independently reported returnee abuse in Laos," said Kay Danes, who was tortured in Laos. [http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1108993.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1108993.html)

In the last several days, a team of Australian journalists from "The Age" were barred from entering a secret prison, surrounded by razor wire and Lao Peoples Army troops in the Paksan area. There thousands of Hmong refugees from Thailand's Huay Nam Khao and Nong Khai were recently forcibly repatriated. Laos' denies the existence of its secret detention jails, reeducation camps and gulag system. It denies the persecution the Laotian and Hmong refugees and Lao Hmong civilians and dissident groups hiding in the jungles and mountains of Laos.

In recent months and years, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other independent human rights and refugee organizations have documented the persecution of Laotians and Hmong by the LPDR regime, including the disappearance and killing of civilians.

<http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA260022006?open&of=ENG-LAO>

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGUSA20070323001>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA26/003/2007>

Laos has been listed as among the world's most closed and repressive societies for journalists by the Paris-based Journalists Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières—or RSF ). Many LPDR senior leaders in Laos have been listed as "Press Predators." Journalists are assigned government minders in Laos, or are monitored by state authorities. Independent ownership of the news media is strictly prohibited. Hmong guides helping independent journalists are still imprisoned in Laos. <http://www.pr-inside.com/open-access-for-journalists-to-lao-r1613131.htm>

<http://www.rsf.org/Open-letter-to-President-Choummaly.html>

Laos under the LPDR was listed among the worst nations in the world in terms of the lack of press freedom by RSF in their 2009 Press Freedom Index. The LPDR regime in Laos is list at the near bottom of 175 nations rated around the globe, coming in at 169 with Burma, North Korea and other authoritarian regimes. [www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html](http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html)

In November of 2009, Laos arrested a group of over 300 Laotians who were appealing for reform in Laos. Other groups were also arrested. The LPDR continues to jail nine of the Laotian protesters who Amnesty International has designated as prisoners of conscience. The Laotians have disappeared in Laos. The were last jailed in Sam Khe Prison. The European Parliament passed a resolution on November 26, 2009 urging the release of the Laotians and other political prisoners, including Lao student leaders from the October 1999 pro-democracy protests. [http://www.media-newswire.com/release\\_1106783.html](http://www.media-newswire.com/release_1106783.html)  
<http://www.onlineprnews.com/news/12936-1259340801-ep-thailand-urged-to-free-hmong-refugees-laos-urged-to-free-students.html>

The head of the Lao effort to forcibly repatriate Lao Hmong refugees from Thailand to Laos is a senior Lao Peoples Army (LPA) general who has a track record of denying findings of war crimes and atrocities by Amnesty International, the United Nations and others. Brigadier General Bouasieng Champaphanh (AKA Bouaxieng Champaphanh or Bouxieng Champaphanh), chairman of the Lao-Thai general border sub-committee, is also the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Lao Armed Forces which has targeted the Hmong in Laos for military attacks and political and religious persecution. General Bouasieng Champaphanh has been put in charge of the Hmong repatriated from Thailand to Laos.

<http://www.onlineprnews.com/news/16061-1262102519-laos-general-involved-with-atrocities-war-crimes-denials-against-hmong-in-charge-of-repatriation-resettlement.html>

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