

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 169

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to democracy, free elections, and human rights in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 13, 1999

Mr. VENTO (for himself and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to democracy, free elections, and human rights in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Whereas in 1975, the Pathet Lao party supplanted the existing Lao government and the Lao Royal Family, and established a "people's democratic republic", in violation of the 1962 Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol, as well as the 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos;

Whereas since the 1975 overthrow of the existing Lao Government, Laos has been under the sole control of the Lao People's Democratic Party;

Whereas the present Lao Constitution provides for human rights protection for the Lao people, and Laos is a signatory to international agreements on civil and political rights;

Whereas Laos has become a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which calls for the creation of open societies in each of its member states by the year 2020;

Whereas despite that, the State Department's "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998" notes that the government has only slowly eased restrictions on basic freedoms and begun codification of implementing legislation for rights stipulated in the Lao Constitution, and continues to significantly restrict the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion;

Whereas according to Amnesty International, serious problems persist in the human rights record of the Government of Laos, including the continued detention of political prisoners and the treatment of such prisoners in a manner that is degrading, abusive, and inhumane;

Whereas in February 1998, one political prisoner of the Government of Laos, Thongsouk Saysangkhi, died, and an unknown number of other political prisoners still remain inside its prisons; and

Whereas allegations of persecution and human rights abuse of the Hmong who repatriated to Laos continue, and Hmong families of detained political prisoners are reported to be threatened daily under the Communist Government in Laos: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 representatives that the present Government of Laos
3 should—

4 (1) respect international norms of human rights
5 and democratic freedoms for the Lao people, and
6 fully honor its commitments to those norms and
7 freedoms as embodied in its constitution and inter-
8 national agreements, and in the 1962 Declaration on
9 the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol and the
10 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos;

11 (2) issue a public statement specifically re-
12 affirming its commitment to protecting religious
13 freedom and other basic human rights;

14 (3) fully institute a process of democracy,
15 human rights, and openly contested free and fair
16 elections in Laos, and ensure specifically that the
17 National Assembly elections—currently scheduled
18 for 2002—are openly contested; and

19 (4) allow access for international human rights
20 monitors, including the International Committee of
21 the Red Cross and Amnesty International, to Lao
22 prisons, and to all regions of the country to inves-
23 tigate allegations of human rights abuses, including
24 those against the Hmong people, when requested.

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