

106TH CONGRESS
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S. RES. 309

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding conditions in Laos.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 23, 2000

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. KOHL, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. GRAMS) submitted the following resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate regarding conditions in
Laos.

Whereas Laos was devastated by civil war from 1955 to 1974;

Whereas the people of Laos have lived under the authoritarian, one-party government of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party since the overthrow of the existing Royal Lao government in 1975;

Whereas the communist government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic sharply curtails basic human rights, including freedom of speech, assembly, association, and religion;

Whereas political dissent is not allowed in Laos and those who express their political will are severely punished;

Whereas the Lao constitution protects freedom of religion but the Government of Laos in practice restricts this right;

Whereas Laos is not a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Whereas Laos is a party to international human rights treaties, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women;

Whereas the 1999 State Department Report on Human Rights Practices in Laos finds that “societal discrimination against women and minorities persist”;

Whereas the State Department’s report also finds that the Lao government “discriminates in its treatment of prisoners” and uses “degrading treatment, solitary confinement, and incommunicado detention against perceived problem prisoners”;

Whereas two American citizens, Houa Ly and Michael Vang, were last seen on the border between Laos and Thailand in April 1999 and may be in Laos; and

Whereas many Americans of Hmong and Lao descent are deeply troubled by the conditions in Laos: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate calls on the Government

2 of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic to—

3 (1) respect the basic human rights of all of its

4 citizens, including freedom of speech, assembly, as-

5 sociation, and religion;

1 (2) ratify the Universal Declaration of Human
2 Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and
3 Political Rights;

4 (3) fulfill its obligations under the international
5 human rights treaties to which it is a party, includ-
6 ing the International Convention on the Elimination
7 of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Con-
8 vention on the Political Rights of Women;

9 (4) take demonstrable steps to ensure that
10 Hmong and other ethnic minorities who have been
11 returned to Laos from Thailand and elsewhere in
12 Southeast Asia are—

13 (A) accepted into Lao society on an equal
14 par with other Lao citizens;

15 (B) allowed to practice freely their ethnic
16 and religious traditions and to preserve their
17 language and culture without threat of fear or
18 intimidation; and

19 (C) afforded the same educational, eco-
20 nomic, and professional opportunities as other
21 residents of Laos;

22 (5) allow international humanitarian organiza-
23 tions, including the International Red Cross, to gain
24 unrestricted access to areas in which Hmong and
25 other ethnic minorities have been resettled;

1 (6) allow independent monitoring of prison con-
2 ditions;

3 (7) release from prison those who have been ar-
4 bitrarily arrested on the basis of their political or re-
5 ligious beliefs; and

6 (8) cooperate fully with the United States Gov-
7 ernment in the ongoing investigation into the where-
8 abouts of Houa Ly and Michael Vang, two United
9 States citizens who were last seen near the border
10 between Laos and Thailand in April 1999.

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