



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

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8 April, 2013

Hon. Alberto Del Rosario

Secretary

Department of Foreign Affairs

2330 Roxas Boulevard

Pasay City

Dear Secretary Del Rosario:

Greetings!

We, Philippine human rights organizations express deep concern over the lack of progress and information regarding the investigations into the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Sombath Somphone. It's been four months since the prominent Lao Development Worker and a Ramon Magsaysay Awardee, Mr. Sobath Somphone, was forcibly made to disappear by the Laotian authorities after security camera footage showed him being taken away from a police post in the city of Vientiane on 15 December, 2012.

The refusal by the Laotian government to acknowledge any responsibility for Mr. Sombath's fate and whereabouts has increased fears for his safety and its claim that he was kidnapped for personal or business reasons without any prompt, transparent and thorough investigations give us more reasons to be believed that they are involved. The inaction of the Laotian government on Sombath's case is a total disregard of the its state obligations under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICAPAED) which it signed on 29 September, 2008.

We reiterate the call by the United Nations on the Laotian government to take concrete actions to surface Sombath and to bring him back safe to his family. We therefore urge the ASEAN and its human rights commission to intervene and take his case as litmus test for its regional human rights mechanism.

Mr. Secretary, we expect the Philippines as one of the strongest champions of human rights in the ASEAN to take the lead in the realization of human rights for all in the region especially to guarantee that the right not to be subjected to enforced

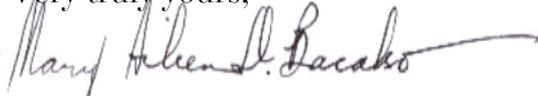
disappearance is fully recognized and respected. In fact, the Philippines takes pride as the first Asian country to have a law criminalizing enforced disappearance. We just hope that the passage of the law will soon facilitate the Philippine government's accession to the ICPAPED to complete the rights protection against enforced disappearance.

On 12 April, 2013, we will hold a cultural activity in the form of Choral Reading with Music and Interpretative Dance in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs at 9:00 am in support of the global campaign to **Surface Sombath Somphone and All *Desaparecidos***.

Mr. Secretary, we shall truly appreciate it if you can join us in this activity or at least give our representatives an audience to briefly discuss Sombath's case and what possible support we can give to his family.

Thank you and warmest regards.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Aileen D. Bacalso". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal flourish at the end.

MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO

Secretary General

AFAD