



6.2.2013

B7-0054/2013

JOINT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on Laos: the case of Sombath Somphone

– on behalf of the EPP Group

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...., on behalf of the S&D Group

– ..., on behalf of the ALDE Group

– ..., on behalf of the ECR Group

– ..., on behalf of the Greens/ALE Group

– Marie-Christine Vergiat, Jürgen Klute, Paul Murphy, Sören Bo Søndergaard, Helmut Scholz, Nikolaos Chountis..., on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

replacing the motions by the following groups:

- PPE (B7-0064/2013)
- S&D (B7-0063/2013)
- ALDE (B7-0065/2013)
- ECR (B7-0067/2013)
- Greens/ALE (B7-0054/2013)
- GUE/NGL (B7-0077/2013)

B7-000/2013

European Parliament joint motion for a resolution on Laos: the case of Sombath Somphone

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Laos,
 - having regard to the Statement by the spokesperson of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 21 December 2012 on Laos,
 - having regard to the Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton of 21 December 2012 on the disappearance of Sombath Somphone in Laos,
 - having regard to the Statement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of 16 January 2013 on the disappearance of Lao Civil Society Leader Sombath Somphone,
 - having regard to the statements by Lao Foreign Ministry of 19 December 2012 and the Ambassador of Laos to the UN on 4 January 2013,
 - having regard to letters of numerous European and national parliamentarians, and the Joint Open Letter by 65 NGOs to the Lao Prime Minister of 17 January 2013 on the disappearance of Sombath Somphone,
 - having regard to the letter by Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development to the Chairperson of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of 4 January 2013,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders of 2008,
 - having regard to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICCPED) to which Laos is a signatory and the UN Declaration of 18 December 1992 on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 ratified by Laos in 2009,
 - having regard to the UNHCR Universal Periodic Review of Laos of 21 September 2010,
 - having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Lao People's Democratic Republic of 1 December 1997,
 - having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Sombath Somphone, a prominent figure in social development and youth education, disappeared on 15 December 2012 in the capital city of Vientiane; whereas the CCTV footage obtained by his family shows that Sombath Somphone was last

seen with local police at the Thadeau police post around 6 pm on the date of his disappearance and driven away in a car by men in civilian clothes;

- B. whereas in its statement of 19 December 2012 the Government confirmed the incident as recorded on the security camera; whereas the authorities claim he was a victim of a kidnapping driven by personal or business conflicts,
 - C. whereas the UN and 65 international human rights organisations have expressed fears that Sombath Somphone may have been subjected to enforced disappearance, possibly related to his work, and express grave concern over his safety and the lack of progress and information regarding investigations by the Lao authorities into the facts of Sombath Somphone's disappearance,
 - D. whereas his family has been unable to locate him since that day despite repeated calls to the local authorities and searches in the adjacent area,
 - E. whereas Sombath Somphone is widely appreciated and well-known for his extensive work in the fields of sustainable and just development, notably through the creation in 1996 of PADETC the "Training Center for participative Development" and has received in 2005 the "Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community leadership",
 - F. whereas in October 2012, Sombath Somphone, as part of the Lao National Organizing Committee, was one of the partners in organizing the "9th Asia-Europe People-to-People Forum" in Vientiane, ahead of the ASEM 9, and was one of the key speakers,
 - G. whereas a group of ASEAN parliamentarians visited Laos in the week of 14 to 18 January 2013 to inquire about Sombath Somphone,
 - H. whereas there are violations of fundamental freedoms, particularly press and media freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, academic freedom and the rights of minorities in Laos,
1. Expresses its deep concern about the disappearance, safety and well-being of Sombath Somphone;
 2. Is concerned about the tardiness and lack of transparency of the investigation into the disappearance of Sombath Somphone; calls on the Lao authorities to undertake prompt, transparent and thorough investigations, in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, and to ensure the immediate and safe return of Sombath Somphone to his family;
 3. Calls on the HR/VP to closely monitor the Lao government's investigations about the disappearance of Sombath Somphone;
 4. Asks the Lao authorities to reaffirm publicly the legality and the legitimacy of the work for sustainable development and social justice, in order to counter the intimidation provoked by disappearances such as of Sombath Somphone;

5. Welcomes the visit of a group of ASEAN parliamentarians to Laos in January 2013 to seek information about Sombath Somphone and calls on the ASEAN Human Rights Commission to establish an inquiry Committee to investigate the events surrounding the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone;
6. Calls on the EU to put Laos among its priorities for the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council;
7. Stresses that the Lao authorities should take all necessary steps to end the practice of arbitrary arrests and secret detention; calls on the Lao authorities to make enforced disappearance a criminal offense and to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; stresses that enforced disappearances are clear violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms;
8. Calls on the Government of Laos to respect the rights of expression and association, the rights of minorities and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief ending all restrictions on the exercise of this right, as recommended at the UN Universal Periodic Review on 21 September 2010;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government and Parliament of Laos.