



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

5.2.2013

B7-0064/2013

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a 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
(2013/2535(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on Laos: the case of Sombath Somphone
(2013/2535(RSP))**

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 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 well-respected member of Lao civil society, disappeared on 15 December 2012 in the capital city of Vientiane; whereas reports indicate that Sombath Somphone went missing after being stopped at a police checkpoint, whereas the family of Sombath Somphone has been unable to locate him since he disappeared, despite repeated calls to the authorities and searches in the local area,
- B. whereas Sombath Somphone founded in 1996 the Participatory Development Training Center, which trains Lao youth and local government leaders in community development and poverty reduction, and in 2005 he was awarded with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership; whereas Sombath Somphone was the co-organizer of the Asia-Europe People-to-People Forum that took place in Vientiane in 2012 ahead of the 9th Asia-Europe Summit Meeting (ASEM),
- C. whereas the spokesperson of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights stated: "we are concerned by what appears to be the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone" and "we are highly concerned for his safety and believe that his abduction may be related to his human rights work",
- D. whereas enforced disappearances are defined under international law as the arrest or detention of a person by state officials or their agents followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or to reveal the fate or whereabouts of the person, which places the person outside the protection of the law,
- E. whereas a group of ASEAN parliamentarians visited Laos in the week of 14 to 18

January 2013 to inquire about Sombath Somphone,

1. Expresses its deep concern about the disappearance, safety and well-being of Lao civil society leader Sombath Somphone;
2. Calls on the Lao authorities to undertake prompt, transparent and thorough investigations into the disappearance of Sombath Somphone, in accordance with their obligations under international human right law, and to ensure the immediate and safe return of Sombath Somphone to his family;
3. 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;
4. Welcomes the visit of a group of ASEAN parliamentarians to Laos in January to seek information about Sombath Somphone and to step up regional pressure on the government's efforts to find him;
5. Calls on the EU to put the case of Sombath Somphone among its priorities for the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council if the case has not been resolved satisfactorily before then;
6. 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.