



**29th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on Lao People's Democratic Republic**

**Oral Statement Delivered by R. Iniyan Ilango
On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Thursday, 25 June 2015

Thank you, Mr. President. We welcome recommendations made to the Lao government. We regret that the government has noted and not accepted recommendations related to the protection of human rights defenders¹ and the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association and expression^{2,3}. Despite committing at first UPR cycle to work towards an enabling environment for civil society and human rights defenders (HRDs) the government continues to restrict HRDs and civil society organisations. We remain concerned over the draft Decree on Associations and Foundations, which, if enacted, will further suppress the activities of civil society in the country. Furthermore, existing laws continue to impose severe restrictions on media freedom, and the newly introduced Decree on Information Management on the Internet criminalises criticism of the government online. We urge the Lao government to repeal or amend all existing laws that restrict the rights to freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association including the Decree on Associations, the Decree on INGOs, the Media Law, the Law on Publications, the Internet Law, and various restrictive provisions in the Penal Law to ensure full compliance with international human rights standards. The government must also withdraw all regressive draft laws including the proposed Decree on Associations and Foundations.

We deplore the Lao government's unwillingness to effectively investigate the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone. The Lao government's failure to accept many of the recommendations⁴ related to the disappearance of Mr. Somphone stands testimony to Lao authorities' apathy towards mounting calls from his family and the international community to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation into his disappearance aimed at determining his fate. We reiterate our call to the government to immediately undertake a thorough and impartial investigation into the enforced disappearance of Mr. Somphone in accordance with international standards and with the assistance of the international community.

Finally, we urge the Lao government to submit all outstanding and overdue state party reports to Treaty Bodies,⁵ and immediately accept pending requests for official country visits by the Special Rapporteurs on summary executions, on adequate housing, and on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. We further call on the government to publicly set out a comprehensive, measurable and time-bound action plan for the implementation of UPR recommendations, in full cooperation and consultation with civil society.

Thank you Mr. President.

1 Recommendations 121.151 and 121.156

2 Recommendations 121.146, 121.147, 121.148, 121.149, 121.150, 121.151, 121.152, 121.153, 121.154 and 121.155

3 Recommendations 121.129, 121.135, 121.136, 121.137, 121.138, 121.139, 121.140, 121.141, 121.142, 121.143, 121.144, 121.145 and 121.146

4 Recommendations 121.23, 121.25, 121.94, 121.95, 121.96, 121.97, 121.98, 121.99, 121.100, 121.101, 121.102 and 121.151

5 Recommendations 121.66, 121.67 and 121.68