



**United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review
Lao People's Democratic Republic**

Submission of Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc.
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Jubilee Campaign promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and religious minorities; advocates the release of prisoners of conscience; and protects and promotes the freedom and safety of children from bodily harm and sexual exploitation.

A Vital Voice for Those Suffering in Silence

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**United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review of Member-State Laos**

Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc., in special consultative status with ECOSOC, submits this analysis of religious freedom and human rights in Laos as a contribution to the Universal Periodic Review of UNHRC member-state Laos.

Freedom of Religion: Dangers for Christian Minority

1. Christians comprise a small 1% of the population in Laos, but the government has taken action with impunity against churches, church leaders, and Christian citizens regarding the practice of their faith. The Lao Constitution guarantees religious freedom to all individuals and Article 5 of the Law on Criminal Procedure prohibits arrest, detention or building search without an order from a public prosecutor or from a people's court according to Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom (HRWLRW).
2. In violation its own legal proceedings, the Lao government has repeatedly harassed and cracked down on the Christian community in the last year. In March 2009, Lao officials ordered more than 40 Christian families in Ban Mai village to relocate to Nonsomboon, about 12 miles north, for "administrative reasons," said HRWLRF.
3. In mid-July 2009, officials and residents of Katin village in Ta Oih district, Saravan province, Laos, stole and slaughtered livestock belonging to nine Christian families, attempting to force them to recant their faith. A week later, authorities announced they "banned the Christian faith" from Katin village. Compass Direct News reports that the Katin chief and village security, social and religious affairs officials, warned the 53 Christian residents of the village to worship the traditional Lao spirits or risk losing all village rights, including their homes and livestock they had confiscated the week before.
4. In September, church leader Thao Oun from Boukham Church in Savannakhet Province was arrested for embracing Christianity and threatened with exile if he did not renounce his faith. Officials from Liansai village made it clear that they would kill him if his arrest is made public, according to a human rights organization. The organization reported that Oun was detained, interrogated, and terrorized for almost six hours by police. He was ultimately charged with bringing destruction to the Lao nation and government because of his conversion to a foreign religion.
5. HRWLRF reported that the sub-district chief of police told Oun that "the death of all believers in Boukham Church" would be the only thing to stop his torture. The Liansai village officials and security forces also arrested Thao Aom, another recent Christian convert. He was interrogated and authorities attempted to force him to recant his faith also. Lao officials have now denied schooling to Christian children from the Church and cut off access to public medical care and village wells.

6. Abuses of authority such as these are punishable by law in Laos. The law states the offender can be punished and imprisoned three to five years and fined from 2 million kip to 7 million kip (US\$240 to US\$840) for these types of abuses, yet no justice has been done for the Christians in Laos.
7. Churches are required to register with the government and apply for approval for building, construction, printing religious texts, and contacting foreign religious affiliates. Any type of gathering, including gatherings in private homes, must be approved in advance by local officials. Authorities view all unregistered churches and religious gatherings as illegal and foreign missionaries are prohibited from sharing their faith, or “proselytizing.”
8. Only three churches in Laos are recognized: The Lao Evangelical Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. Church leaders experience arbitrary arrests, threats and kidnappings. The greatest persecution in Laos is suffered by Protestants, who are considered a “threat” to the government. Many Christians in Laos have been banished from their towns.
9. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an agency funded by the U.S. government, reports that “the degree of persecution in Laos varies from region to region,” but that the government of Laos has “launched a new crackdown on Bru tribal Christians in southern Savannakhet” specifically. At least 24 Bru Christians were “beaten, tied to a post under the hot sun, tortured with red ants and forced to sign documents renouncing their faith,” before being released, though two remained in extended custody.
10. Laos must enforce its own Constitution to bring justice to victims of religious violence. Laos must not allow Christians to become a targeted minority and must ensure the free expression of all religions for all people.

Human Trafficking

1. Lack of resources, poor training of officials and corruption block the Lao government from being effective in complying with the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking, according to the 2009 Trafficking in Persons report. Women are vulnerable to be trafficked to China, but Laos is primarily a transit country for Vietnamese, Chinese and Burmese women trafficked to Thailand.
2. Laos must find resources to improve the training of its officials and systems to better identify trafficking victims in transit and also prosecute more traffickers as they are identified.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Laos must not grant impunity to its officials who persecute the Christian minority in Laos.

2. Laos must adhere to its Constitutional mandates for religious freedom and freedom of expression.
3. Laos must adhere to its Constitutional mandates for the punishment of officials who abuse authority by the use of force, weapons, torture, indecent words or acts affecting the honor and reputation of the victim.
4. Laos must improve its capacity to identify trafficking victims and prosecute traffickers so that more justice may be brought to the victims.