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UN Watch Statement
UPR of Lao
29th Session, UNHRC

Delivered by Ms Rebecca Simon

Thank you, Mr President.

UN Watch is concerned by the grave human rights abuses in Lao, in particular by the numerous enforced disappearances. We are equally concerned that the government of Lao continues to restrict such universal rights as freedoms of speech, association and peaceful assembly.

UN Watch regrets that the responses to the recommendations concerning the country's recent UPR session were not submitted earlier. The government did not accept the most meaningful recommendations, such as to conduct an independent and in-depth investigation on the cases of disappearances, or amending the Prime Minister's Internet decree.

During the country's UPR, many states voiced their concern about the widespread practice of enforced disappearances. Lao has failed to abide by its international obligation of transparency and accountability. Most recently, in 2012, civil society advocate and human rights defender, Sombath Somphone, was seen taken from a police station into an unknown vehicle, never to be seen again. We await an update from the government on his condition.

Mr President, the government of Lao severely restricts their citizens' freedom of expression. Just last September the government adopted an extreme Internet decree, restricting freedom of speech in a manner that exceeds the limits set forth by Article 19 of the ICCPR. The government continues to impose harsh laws for all those who dare to speak out online. All citizens of Lao should be able to voice their opinions without fear of reprisal.

UN Watch urges Lao to investigate all cases of enforced disappearances and to put an end to such practices. We also ask that Lao guarantee the enjoyment of all rights by its population, including the freedoms of speech, association and peaceful assembly.

Thank you, Mr President.