

May 15, 2009

The Honorable Russell Feingold  
1600 Aspen Commons  
Middleton, WI 53562-4716

Dear Honorable Senator Feingold,

We are your constituents from western Wisconsin, who are advocating on behalf of the Hmong Lao in Thailand. As a diverse group of American Hmong and Americans, we are joining forces to rally against the repatriation of some 5,000 Hmong Lao who are still in Huay Nam Kao along with another 158 Hmong Lao who are in a detention camp in Nong Khai, Thailand. We are calling on you to do whatever you can to stop this repatriation now!

The Thai and Lao governments have said that the Hmong Lao people are “economic” and “illegal” immigrants but, in fact, many are former Vietnam allies and their families, and still others are seeking asylum status from religious and political persecution. Regardless of the claim, one thing is for certain. Since 2004, the Thai and Lao governments have not followed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Law, article 14 (1). In this article, it says “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution.” Thailand did sign this declaration. The Thai government has not allowed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to monitor or screen these Hmong. The Thai government claims they have screened them but there isn’t any documentation to prove it.

Today, there are approximately 5,000 Hmong still in the Huay Nam Khao camp in Phetchabun Province, Thailand. It has been learned that the Thai government has permission from our State Department to carry-out the repatriation in May of 2009. If these people are returned to Laos, they will be subjected to torture, cruelty, jail, or even death. The UNHCR **must** be allowed to monitor these people.

The UNHCR has recognized the 158 Hmong Lao in Nong Khai to be refugees. For over two years, these people have been held hostage under horrendous conditions. The majority are women and children who have been forced to live inside two tiny 9 X 9 meter mosquito-infested cells for 22 hours a day. They have become chronically sick and many are on the verge of committing suicide. Why has our government remained silent and oblivious to these inhumane conditions?

We are calling on you to demand that President Obama, Congress, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton immediately stop the repatriation and take the following actions as proposed by Amnesty International:

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- to allow Lao Hmong individuals in Huay Nam Khao camp, and elsewhere, to exercise the right to seek asylum through full and fair procedures. The forcible return of asylum-seekers before their asylum claims have been heard and processed in a full and fair asylum procedure violates the principle of non-refoulement;
- not to return individuals at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture and other ill-treatment, as well as arbitrary and indefinite detention, to Laos;
- to make independent monitoring of returnees inside Laos a prerequisite for any further returns;
- to unconditionally and immediately release the group of 158 refugees arbitrarily detained at Nong Khai Immigration Detention Center, and allow them to resettle in third countries.

The following is a link to information from Amnesty International in regard to contacting the Thai authorities:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA39/007/2008/en/31047cec-a751-11dd-8899-8f759187dd0e/asa390072008en.pdf>

We truly believe that the United States government has a moral obligation to help these Hmong people. It is time for our government to take action now and put an end to the injustices that the Hmong people have suffered. Our government can be the hope that will help make a difference for thousands of Hmong refugees.

We look forward to personally hearing from you concerning this dire situation.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Houa C. Moua  
AMOS/Chair of Hmong Advocacy Task Force Committee  
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