

HMONG

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NEWSLETTER

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[#HmongInIsolation](#)

Hmong in French Guiana



Have you ever heard of the **Hmong people** living in Laos?

Did you know that during the Vietnam War, the American army led a “**Secret War**” with their help?

Did you know that today, it is estimated that a couple of thousands of them live in the hostile Laotian jungle, fleeing persecution **by the government**?

The **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)** has decided to launch a series of newsletters focusing on the Hmong. Because the world can no longer turn a blind eye to the gross human rights violations committed against them, this campaign aims at raising awareness about the plight of the Hmong living in the Laotian jungle and beyond.

Follow the campaign on social media with the hashtag **#HmongInIsolation**



Hmong Diaspora in French Guiana



UNPO has already published about the Hmong diasporic community in the United States. However, the Hmong people have emigrated to even further-away places. In this edition of our bi-monthly newsletter, UNPO's research will focus on the small Hmong community of 2,100 members in French Guiana.

French Guiana is a French overseas department (département d'outre-mer) on the Atlantic coast of South America, bordering Brazil to the east and Suriname to the west. Its political status resembles very much that of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The territory is thus part of the European Union and the currency is the euro. With a population of 290,971 people and a total area of approximately 83,500km², the country is one of the least densely populated region on a ranking of countries and dependent territories in the world. The cultural and historical backgrounds of the inhabitants is diverse, which is a reflection of the country's colonial legacy. The country's ethnic make-up is comprised roughly of 36% Creoles, 26% Haitians, 10% Europeans, 8%

Brazilians, 4% Surinamese, 4% Amerindians, 3% Hong Kong Chinese, 2.5% British Guyanese and 1.5% Hmong and Laotian refugees.

The first group of Hmong people arrived in Cayenne, French Guiana's capital, back in 1977. From there they continued their journey to a village called 'Cacao', a one and a half hours car drive south of the capital in the Amazonian jungle. This group of 45 Hmong refugees had fled their homeland after the end of the Vietnam War and sought refuge in this tropical European overseas territory. A French missionary, Father Yves Bertrais, had established contact with a Thai refugee camp and suggested French Guiana as a place of possible resettlement after the War.

Today, the Hmong people in French Guiana mostly live in farming communities. Cacao is currently the city with the largest amount of Hmong inhabitants in French Guiana. The importance of farming in this city is such that schools are closed on Wednesdays so children can help their parents prepare the agricultural goods for the market. The farming activities are, however, different from those in Laos since subsistence farming is not an option in French Guiana. The farmers do not relocate themselves anymore after soil exhaustion and also need cash money to pay for goods such as electricity, gasoline, water or meat for their own consumption.



Latest News

July 2018

On 12 July 2018, the office of United States (US) Representative Tom Garrett (R-VA) introduced a [resolution](#) on the situation of the Hmong people in Northern Laos condemning the country's repeated and ongoing assaults on Hmong communities living in the jungle. Prepared in cooperation between the office of Congressman Garrett, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the Congress of World Hmong Peoples (CWHP), the resolution also highlights the fact that the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) continuously rejects requests of state parties and international institutions to conduct a proper and impartial investigation into the matter. The UNPO and the CWHP applaud the efforts of Congressman Garrett in bringing this situation into the public light. The resolution complements initiatives taken by UNPO in Europe, where, most recently, an [open letter](#) addressed to key European Union (EU) policymakers urges the EU to take immediate action on this matter.

The UNPO, in collaboration with the CWHP, has organised a two-day advocacy and human rights [training](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 28-29 of July. The training has provided Hmong human rights activists living in the US with advocacy skills in order to build their capacity to lobby for the rights of the Hmong community.



On the same weekend, the second annual [Hmong Festival](#) was celebrated in Wausau, Wisconsin, US, attracting more than 8,000 visitors. The two-day festival aims to celebrate Hmong culture in the community of Wausau, where Hmong-Americans make up for 12 percent of the population. The events at the festival included singing and dancing competitions, sports tournaments and flag football.

August 2018

After having endured decades of repression of their religion, members of a Hmong Catholic community in Vietnam make efforts to pass on their [religious beliefs](#) to younger generations by introducing their children to their religious practices. Taught in Hmong, the initiative has also helped preserving their culture and language, which is not taught at public schools in Vietnam.





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