HMONG NEWSLETTER

Hmong Under Attack: Three Months of Despair

#HmongInIsolation February 2019
Have you ever heard of the **Hmong people** living in Laos?

Did you know that during the Vietnam War, the United States (US) 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 Under Attack: Three Months of Despair

After the signature of the Paris Peace Accords, which officially put an end to the Vietnam War in 1973, another war was launched by the Lao People’s Democratic Republic against the Hmong ethnic minority, blamed for its support to the US during the Vietnam War.

The UNPO has been receiving direct updates from its Member organisation the Congress of World Hmong People (CWHP), which has since been sharing concerning images and information about the situation of the groups of Hmong people under attack. The first direct confrontation on 15 October occurred when a group of about thirty Hmong men, women and children left their hiding place to search for food in the area and encountered a group of Lao military. It was reported that the military stopped the Hmong group and immediately opened fired on them, deploying an army tank and two trucks, leaving one wounded Hmong man.

While some Hmong found refuge in other countries such as the US and Thailand, many continue to live in Laos, where some fled to the jungles around the Phou Bia region in particular in order to hide from the threat of military attacks from the Laotian military forces. Since then, these Hmong have indeed endured State-sponsored persecution and, consequently, have suffered violations of their human rights, including extrajudicial killings, torture, illegal arrests and arbitrary detentions. For this group, the condition has rapidly and alarmingly deteriorated along the years. And it is particularly the case since 15 October 2018, when the attacks performed by the Laotian forces have intensified.

Subsequently, on 20 October, the Laotian military attacked the place where the community of the CWHP's
President, Mr Chonglor Her, was hiding, in an attempt to cut his means of communication off. After almost five hours of fighting, five Hmong were killed and two wounded, among whom men, women and children. Since then, this Hmong group has endured constant attacks, including the use of poisoning weapons that led people to experience symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, headache, chest congestion and weakness in the legs and arms. While helicopters from the Laotian military forces continue to fly over the region appearing to search for the Hmong, the group remains isolated and still lacks the means to meet its basic needs, as it is forced to constantly be on the move.

Deprived from means to forage for food and medicine in the jungle, due to the presence of the Laotian military forces in the area, this group has been suffering from severe starvation and has no possibility to treat those who have been wounded. Additionally, the dead bodies of those who were shot and killed by Lao military have not yet been buried due to heavy Lao military presence in the area.

In the face of these developments, on 23 November, a group of 52 Hmong have surrendered to the Laotian military forces. Since then, it has been reported to the UNPO that the wounded people were treated, and their location was indicated by one correspondent. However, all the surrendered Hmong have had their cellphones confiscated by the Lao forces, depriving them from means of communication.

The President of the CWHP has shared his concern over the future of this group. In the past, those who surrendered were indeed instrumentalised by the Lao authorities to lure the people who have remained in the jungle to surrender. Those who have surrendered were silently or even
openly persecuted by Lao forces. In these cases, the fear of being targeted by the Lao government has refrained people from sharing what happened to them, silencing the victims and their relatives.

While the future of the surrendered Hmong remains uncertain and the group who has remained in the jungle continues to suffer from constant attacks and face severe starvation, President Her has questioned whether this attack should be classified as a war crime, as the use of chemical weapons and substances has been previously reported and sustained by victims, such as illustrated in the documentary “Hunted like animals” by Rebecca Summer (2006). In spite of several pieces of strong evidence that support the accuracy of the atrocities committed against the Hmong in Laos, such as reports from a few years ago issued by international bodies as the UN OHCHR, the Laotian authorities continue to deny having committed these actions.

The Hmong people demands that the Laotian government no longer conceals such atrocities and the severe violations it has been committing for decades and calls on the United Nations to hold the country’s authorities responsible for their acts. The UNPO urges the international community to immediately act in support of the Hmong communities that are currently under attack by the Lao forces and prevent them from suffering further severe violations of their basic human rights.

For updates on the situation of the Hmong living in the Laotian jungle, visit our Hmong Timeline.
Six candidates of Hmong descent advanced to the general election in November in Maplewood and Minneapolis, Minnesota, US. Running to join Senator Foung Hawj, their victory would bring the total number of Hmong-American legislators to seven. Minnesota is home to about 66,000 Hmong-American residents, which is a little over one percent of the state's population. It was 16 years ago that Senator Mee Moua became the first Hmong-American legislator in the nation, followed months later by Representative Cy Thao. Although the Hmong-American community is still underrepresented in mainstream politics, the rise of Hmong-American political participation corresponds to the overall success and progress of the community.

November 2018

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)'s Annual Report referred to the Laotian government and its continuous suspicion over certain ethnicities and restrictions of religious practices of the Hmong, among others.

In November 2018 as well, members of the Hmong community in La Crosse, in the state of Wisconsin in the US, defended the passing of a bill that includes the teaching of the history of the Hmong in local schools' curricula. As Wisconsin is home to over 49,000 Hmong-Americans who have found refuge in the US, the community argues in favour of the importance of their children to be taught about the role their people has played in the Vietnam war, as well as their subsequent persecution by the Laotian Government and severe human rights violations they endure.
Follow us!

Follow us!

Follow us!

Visit our website!

UNPO Brussels
Rue du Pépin 54
Brussels B-1000, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)25 13 14 59
E-mail: unpo.brussels@unpo.org