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ChaoFa Hmong : UNPO Calls on International Community to Act Against Tighter Security Measures

UNPO expresses strong concerns in relation to the [recent announcement](#) by the Lao government about their intention to tighten security in the Xaysomboun in the name of economic development as this might result in discriminatory measures against ethnic minorities living in the province. Specifically, UNPO is concerned about the Hmong people who have been exposed to serious human rights violations and confirms its previous calls for a full independent, international investigation into the serious human rights violations and potential atrocities against the Hmong living in the province.

UNPO reiterates our concerns with the continuous blocking of any independent observers in the area, even on humanitarian grounds. As reported by state-owned media, the government has recently prohibited the presence and support of civil society organizations in the area, including those supporting Hmong farmers, stating that “under no circumstances was there to be any NGO-supported activities in the province”.

UNPO believes that the systematic, protracted and grave human rights violations against the Hmong community in the area may amount to crimes against humanity and we once more urge the government to allow for a full, independent and international investigation into the area, as call on the international community to take a strong stand against this tragic situation.

[On 17 December 2021](#), the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (“Lao PDR” or “Laos”) announced further security measures to accelerate the economic development in Xaysomboun. This has led to a draconian crackdown on any civil society organization operating on the ground, and a total ban on traveling to the province.

The Xaysomboun province is home to the Chaofa Hmong people who has long faced a history of systematic discrimination and human rights violations by the Lao authorities and military. This includes uncompensated land confiscation, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, suppression of freedom of expression, and severe restrictions on [their economic, social and cultural rights](#). UNPO believes that the seriousness of these violations merit a full investigation into whether they constitute genocide given the very existence of ChaoFa Hmong people is under threat.

Since 2016, the Laotian Security Forces have reportedly been indiscriminately firing on Hmong civilians, including children, in the area. Ethnic Hmong in the region largely have had to live in the jungle or blend into urban areas. A final push to eliminate the Chaofa Hmong culminated in March

2021 with the total cordoning off the area, including the prohibition of civilian entrance and exit from the jungle, leaving them completely cut off from both Laotian society and the international community, as well as proper access to adequate supplies of food, water, healthcare and means of external communication.

In our report [Hmong in Isolation](#) and our [letter](#) to the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, the UNPO has detailed how the escalation in violence against the Chaofa Hmong coincides with increased economic development and foreign investment in Xaysomboun. The development projects in the area include [hydroelectric dams](#), mining activities, a multi-million dollar [tourist facility worth an estimated US\\$ 500 million](#), as well as a recently completed Laos-China [high-speed railway worth US\\$6 billion](#). In the past two years alone, the Xaysomboun authorities have approved 36 investment projects.

On 15 February 2019, Xaysomboun's Information, Culture and Tourism Department and the Khamphay Sana Group signed a memorandum of understanding concerning a feasibility study on the construction of tourist facilities on Phoubia mountain. In early 2021, the Provincial Governor of Xaysomboun informed the Eleventh Party Congress that it was working "hard to monitor and suppress [occasional flareups of unrest](#)." Subsequently, on 14 March 2021, authorities in Xaysomboun issued a decree restricting access in the Phoubia jungle exclusively to military personnel. In mid-November, the Lao government announced plans to [reopen the country for tourism](#) starting from 2022. Following this country reopening plan for tourists and the recent completion of Laos-China high-speed railway on 2 December 2021, on 17 December 2021, the Lao Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh further pushed for a tighter crackdown on the Xaysomboun region by urging the provincial leaders to "shoulder more responsibility in maintaining peace and security and encouraging economic growth in local communities" and "do more to attract private sector investment in order to capitalise on [the potential offered by the province](#)".

Fearing the Lao government is preparing one final eradication program of the Chaofa Hmong, the UNPO and its member the Congress of World Hmong People (CWHP) has appealed to the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect in October 2021 to investigate the government's actions.

With the Lao government's latest announcement on removing "all sources of insecurity"¹ in the Xaysomboun region, UNPO is actively concerned about the situation of the Chaofa Hmong people and calls on the international community to investigate into the issue and take actions to end the human rights abuses against the Hmong people living in Xaysomboun.

1 Vientiane Times, PM calls for tighter security to spur development in Xaysomboun (17 December 2021), available at https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContenten_PM247.php.