

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 240

Expressing the sense of the Senate with respect to democracy and human rights in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 2, 1998

Mr. THOMAS (for himself, Mr. GRAMS, Mr. SMITH of Oregon, and Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

JUNE 25, 1998

Reported by Mr. HELMS, without amendment

JULY 29, 1998

Considered, amended, and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate with respect to democracy and human rights in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Whereas in 1975, the Pathet Lao party supplanted the existing Lao government and the Lao Royal Family, and established a "people's democratic republic", in violation of the 1962 Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol, as well as the 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos;

Whereas since the 1975 overthrow of the existing Lao government, Laos has been under the sole control of the Lao People's Democratic Party;

Whereas the present Lao Constitution provides for human rights protection for the Lao people, and Laos is a signatory to international agreements on civil and political rights;

Whereas Laos has become a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which calls for the creation of open societies in each of its member states by the year 2020;

Whereas despite that, the State Department’s “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997” notes that the government has only slowly eased restrictions on basic freedoms and begun codification of implementing legislation for rights stipulated in the Lao Constitution, and continues to significantly restrict the freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion; and

Whereas on January 30, 1998, the Lao government arrested and detained forty-four individuals at a Bible study meeting in Vientiane and on March 25 sentenced thirteen Christians from the group to prison terms of three to five years for “creating divisions among the people, undermining the government, and accepting foreign funds to promote religion”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that the
2 present government of Laos should—

3 (1) respect international norms of human rights
4 and democratic freedoms for the Lao people, and
5 fully honor its commitments to those norms and
6 freedoms as embodied in its constitution and inter-
7 national agreements, and in the 1962 Declaration on

1 the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol and the
2 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos;

3 (2) issue a public statement specifically re-
4 affirming its commitment to protecting religious
5 freedom and other basic human rights;

6 (3) fully institute a process of democracy,
7 human rights, and openly-contested free and fair
8 elections in Laos, and ensure specifically that the
9 National Assembly elections—currently scheduled
10 for 2002—are openly contested; and

11 (4) allow access for international human rights
12 monitors, including the International Committee of
13 the Red Cross to Lao prisons, and to all regions of
14 the country to investigate allegations of human
15 rights abuses, including those against the Hmong
16 people, when requested.

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