



# Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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## AFAD Commemorates the 4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sombath Somphone's Disappearance

Manila, 15 December 2016 – Today marks the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disappearance of Sombath Somphone, a community development worker in Laos and recipient of the distinguished Ramon Magsaysay Award for emergent leadership.

Sombath was abducted in Vientiane on the evening of 15 December 2012. CCTV footage shows clearly that he was stopped by the police and then taken away in a pickup truck. Although the evidence is incontrovertible, the Lao Government has always denied any responsibility for his disappearance.

Four years later, there is still no information concerning the fate and whereabouts of Sombath, despite repeated appeals from the international community to the Lao government to investigate his disappearance. Indeed, in the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations 2015, Laos was heavily criticized for its poor Human Rights record and was questioned by many states about the disappearance of Sombath; two factors which determined its exclusion from the Human Rights Council.

As a signatory to the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances, signed on 29 September 2008, Laos has required obligations to prevent and investigate all cases of enforced disappearances. However the investigations carried out have, in no way, lead to any conclusions or to any legal action, either civil or criminal.

AFAD encourages the Philippine Government, who is chairing ASEAN next year, to take the lead in urging ASEAN members, including Laos, to ratify and implement the Convention on Enforced Disappearances and to recognize the competence of the UN Committee Against Enforced Disappearances.

The case of Sombath is an important landmark case, which will continue to affect Laos reputation in regional and international forums until the case has been resolved and the truth revealed.

AFAD calls on the Lao Government to stand by its international obligations and conduct an independent and thorough investigation to provide clarification of the fate and whereabouts of Sombath Somphone.

Signed by,

**KHURRAM PARVEZ**  
Chairperson

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Secretary-General