



## Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

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### **Leaving No Stone Unturned: The Continuing Search for Truth and Justice for Sombath Somphone**

Today marks the fifth anniversary of the enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone, a staunch Lao civil society leader and community development activist who advocated for rural community-based development, especially among the youth. On the fateful evening of December 15, 2012, Sombath was abducted by policemen in Vientiane. Evidence obtained of Sombath's abduction was caught on CCTV, where it showed that he was stopped and taken away on a pickup truck in front of the police station. Laotian authorities immediately denied any involvement in his abduction, which speaks volumes of the palpable culture of impunity in the country that is felt significantly to this day.

Since Sombath's disappearance, there has been massive support all over the world for the campaign to resurface him safely. The movement "The Sombath Initiative," led and represented by his wife Shui Meng Ng, has struggled indefatigably to find truth and justice not only in the case of Sombath, but also in the myriad human rights violations committed by other repressive states.

Having dedicated her life to this struggle, Shui Meng, as an individual member of AFAD has lent her voice to and stood by other families of *desaparecidos* across Asia with the wisdom and knowledge that her journey is not one that must be taken alone but one that must be shared with others who experience the same grief of loss. In a recent meeting with the families of the disappeared in Sri Lanka, Shui Meng expressed her unfaltering support and sympathy, saying, "My message is to never give up. For me, it is important for us to remain the face of this struggle. I do not know how many more years I will live, but my hope is that this doesn't happen to future generations. We cannot let other people take our humanity."

AFAD is one with Shui Meng in continuing the inexorable journey toward truth, justice, redress, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition, so that future generations may not suffer through the indescribable grief and pain that continue to besiege the long-suffering families of the disappeared.

On the fifth anniversary of the disappearance of Sombath, the AFAD Congress currently being convened in Colombo, Sri Lanka, reiterates its strong condemnation of the continuing

enforced disappearance of Sombath Somphone. AFAD vows to leave no stone unturned in the search for truth and justice for Sombath and all *desaparecidos*.

Signed:

**THE DELEGATES**  
6<sup>th</sup> AFAD Congress  
Negombo, Sri Lanka  
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