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By Wameng Moua | Hmong Today

HMONG GRAVES AT THE WAT BEING EXHUMED

(Saint Paul)- As a mental health worker, Xong Khang is usually prepared to deal with the most horrific situations.

Having spent the last two years as an International Organization for Migration (IOM) counselor at the Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand, Khang has dealt with everything from suicide to murder at the camp.

When members of the Bhoti Pavana Chinese foundation began showing up at the Wat Tham Krabok on October 26, Khang admits her limits have been bent out of shape by what has taken place ever since.

With the authorization and blessings of the owners of the Wat Tham Krabok, foundation members have been exhuming bodies of deceased Hmong from their hillside graves, despite the daily outcries from the Hmong inhabitants.

“Despite all that they have already been through, the Hmong at the Wat are severely traumatized by what is happening to their relative’s graves,” explained Khang. “It’s truly horrifying.”

Though the numbers vary according to who is reporting them, Khang estimates that up to a thousand graves have been exhumed by the foundation. Phra Vijit, a Buddhist monk at the temple who is overseeing the grave clearing told “The Nation”, an English language daily newspaper from Thailand, that a total of only 500 graves were planned to be exhumed and eventually cremated according to Buddhist traditions.

The graves needed to be exhumed, Vijit continued, because people living at the bottom of the hills complained about water being contaminated by the dead bodies buried on the hillside.

Vijit also made mention that the Hmong had from the beginning been illegally dumping bodies on the hill, despite many attempts by the monks at the Wat Tham Krabok to stop them.



With over 14,000 Wat Tham Krabok Hmong having already made their way to the United States, the remaining 720 have been held back, mostly because of health issues, but also because of the lack of relatives willing to sponsor them.

The grave digging, most Hmong agree, is yet another act of oppression being carried out by a landlord who is eager to kick them out.

When family members try to stop a grave from being dug up, Khang informed, the Thai army will intervene, often forcing distraught family members at gun-point to allow foundation members to continue with their efforts.

Perhaps what is most disturbing is the manner in which the foundation members are excavating the bodies. According to Khang, foundation members often throw human bones into a vat of boiling water making it easier to clear the bones of any remaining flesh.

“They chop the head off and throw it in the boiling water,” Khang described. “And as for internal organs, they simply dig that from the corpse and leave it where ever it is convenient, often right on the ground where it is some times picked up by a dog and brought back to the camp.”

Already an unhealthy environment, the camp now smells of rotting flesh, making the area unbearable to live in. Though Khang and others have personally brought their complaints to the abbot, Chaleun Panchan, “the monks will not cease with the grave digging, even for one day.”

Hmong-Americans have lodged a formal complaint with the Thai embassy in America, but so far the Thai believe they doing nothing wrong.