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By Pat Kessler

Hmong Protest Grave Desecrations In Thailand

St. Paul (WCCO) — Minnesota lawmakers are calling for an international investigation into the desecration of hundreds of Hmong graves in Thailand.

About 200 Hmong living in Minnesota rallied at the State Capitol today to protest the mass excavation of the graves at Wat Tham Krabok, a Thai refugee camp, and demand the remains be returned.

A disturbing video making the rounds of Minnesota's large Hmong community purportedly shows hundreds of graves dug up outside a temple in Thailand that was once the site of a Hmong refugee camp.

Wat Tham Krabok was a Buddhist monastery home to Thailand's largest Hmong refugee camp until most of the remaining refugees resettled in the United States in the past two years.

More than 2,000 Hmong graves are there, and about 900 have been dug up. In the video, corpses are disinterred, and in some cases they appear mutilated.

"They have dug up these relatives and then to use tools to remove the flesh from the bones, that is totally unacceptable to our culture and to our ways of life and so I am very angry about this," said Chue Lor, a St. Paul resident through an interpreter.

At the Minnesota Capitol members of the Hmong community gathered to protest and watched the House and Senate unanimously ask the State Department to investigate the grave desecrations.

"I could not imagine the horror your families would go through if you were to see these kinds of images from Sweden, or from Norway, or from Germany, or from Ireland, and seeing your grandparents or your relatives and what has happened to them," said Sen. Mee Moua, a Democrat from St. Paul.

Thousands of Hmong lived at the refugee camp until they re-settled in the United States during the last two years.

Officials at the Thailand site say there are 2,000 graves, and that the graves are being excavated because they are contaminating the local water supply.

There's no explanation for the apparent desecration of the bodies.