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## **Minnesota Legislature Demands Answer to Desecration of Hmong Graves**

*Minnesota House and The Senate Pass Resolutions Seeking Thai Government's Cooperation into the Desecration of Hmong Graves, But What Will Happen Next?*

St. Paul, MN - About two hundred Hmong gathered at the Capitol Rotunda April 24, to welcome the House and Senate's resolution calling for Thailand to fulfill its international obligations and take all actions to halt further desecration of Hmong graves in Thailand and return those remains to family members.



The Minnesota Hmong community never seems to run out of turmoil. Several months ago amateur videos of Chinese and Thai digging up Hmong graves in Wat Tham Krabok started surfacing in Minnesota.

Like some sort of horror movie, the video showed the bodies being mutilated, chopped, and strewn. The bones were collected and taken to undisclosed location.

This is not new to the Hmong. In the mid 90s, Thai and Chinese also desecrated Hmong graves in Ban Vinai Refugee Camps. The Hmong were startled and stunned, but they could not act nor have the knowledge to act as their international human and religious rights were severely violated. Historically the Chinese have been desecrating Hmong graves far back into history. No reason has been proven why the Chinese ritually desecrate Hmong graves, except that it was the most insulting procedure the Chinese could perform on the powerless Hmong.

This resolution passed by the Minnesota legislature will be almost impossible to achieve since it calls for terms to be proposed by the U.S. government to a foreign government, which operates by a totally different set of laws and governmental system. As an example, the United States has passed numerous resolutions against Laos's human and religious rights violations, yet Laos has completely disregarded them.

Rep. Cy Thao said he isn't sure what will happen as far as what the Thai government will do. Thao expressed that the resolution definitely sends a stronger message to the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and Thai government, but that the community should continue to monitor the situation and write letters.

A source working in Bangkok, who asked to be anonymous said, "I don't know how far this (the resolution) will go. However the resolution will make the case stronger and may probably be introduced to the Foreign Relation Committee. If that happens, the Foreign Relations Committee will inquire about the issue to the State Department. The State Department will forward the inquiry to the U.S. Embassy in Thailand. There a public affairs officer from the embassy will seek cooperation from the Thai Government through the Thai's Ministry of Interior."

When asked how long this process might take and should Minnesotan Hmong expect anything soon. The source said, "It is not an overnight process. In order to help speed the process there needs to be pressure coming from the State Department, United Nations, and human rights organizations, constantly seeking

cooperation from the Thai government.”

The source believes it would be difficult to return the remains to the appropriate family members, because there are no dental records, and some remains may be contaminated. The anonymous source suggests, perhaps the Hmong could pursue the Thai government and those parties involved to setup a historical memorial at the site as an apology, or to remember the desecrated graves. The source concluded, “The Hmong are easily victimized because they do not work together when they are strong. They only work together when they have minimum strength.”