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St. Paul Mayor Seeks Grave Desecration Probe

St. Paul (AP) — St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman said he will ask U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan this weekend to push for an investigation into reports of desecrated Hmong graves at a refugee camp in Thailand.

Hmong families in Minnesota and Wisconsin have already lodged a human rights complaint with the United Nations over the excavation and dismemberment of hundreds of bodies that began in November, according to the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Coleman and Annan, a 1961 graduate of St. Paul's Macalester College, will be in attendance Saturday for the opening of the school's new Institute for Global Citizenship.

Members of Minnesota's congressional delegation have asked for action by the U.S. State Department, which says it's monitoring the situation.

The State Department said a possible explanation is that a Buddhist monastery near the grave sites at the Wat Tham Krabok refugee camp may have excavated them to protect its water supply.

But some Hmong residents of St. Paul say they've seen video images of dead bodies being dismembered and even heard reports of mummified remains put on public display.

Hundreds of thousands of Hmong fled to Thailand from Laos after the pro-American government they backed lost a power struggle with communists in 1975.

Wat Tham Krabok was one of the largest refugee camps, finally shut down by the Thai government last year. Of the camp's 13,000 residents, about 4,000 settled in Minnesota.

"Even our people who have died in that land do not enjoy the peace of being dead," Jeu Xiong, who came to St. Paul as a refugee in 2004, said through a translator.