

RESOLUTION CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

WHEREAS, the Hmong people became refugees and left their home country to escape persecution, and, since 1976, have made the City of Saint Paul their home; and

WHEREAS, the Hmong people have become citizens and residents with meaningful participation at all levels of life in the City of Saint Paul, and have made significant cultural and economic contributions to the city, region, and State of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, since 2004, the City of Saint Paul has welcomed more than 5,000 Hmong refugees from Wat Thamkrabok monastery in Saraburi, Thailand, where they had lived for more than 20 years; and

WHEREAS, there is substantial evidence that, since October 2005, the Government of Thailand has allowed the desecration of at least 900 Hmong graves at Wat Thamkrabok after most of the refugees had left for the United States. The remains of the refugees' relatives have been dug up, dismembered, and the bones carried away to unknown locations; and

WHEREAS, the desecration of Hmong graves at Wat Thamkrabok is based on a long history of discrimination and persecution against the Hmong in Thailand; and

WHEREAS, the mass exhumation of Hmong graves, many of which were on plots of land purchased by the refugees, has been carried out without the notice, consent or involvement of the relatives of the deceased in Saint Paul; and

WHEREAS, the burial place is a sacred and integral part of traditional Hmong culture. Graves are sacred sites where Hmong manifest their spiritual and religious beliefs and where families pay respect and honor to their ancestors and loved ones according to tradition; and

WHEREAS, the desecration of Hmong graves at Wat Thamkrabok violates the fundamental rights of Hmong Americans of the City of Saint Paul, including the right to be free from discrimination and the right to manifest one's religion or belief. These are rights protected by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, the Government of Thailand's actions at Wat Thamkrabok are a clear violation of its obligations as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, including the right to culture and the right to family. The Government of Thailand's failure to protect these rights also violates customary law as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and

WHEREAS, the gruesome desecration of Hmong graves at Wat Thamkrabok has caused untold anguish, misery, and pain for the Hmong of the City of Saint Paul who have left

deceased loved ones in Wat Thamkrabok; and

WHEREAS, the State Department of the United States sent a communiqué to the Government of Thailand expressing its concern regarding the grave desecration, but no further actions to stop the exhumation of the graves by either government have been forthcoming; and

WHEREAS, the desecration of the graves continues and the location of the remains of the deceased belonging to the Hmong people of the City of Saint Paul are still unknown; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council urges the Minnesota Congressional Delegation, under its full authority and with all possible speed, to pursue appropriate actions to work with the Government of Thailand to put a stop to the further desecration of Hmong graves at Wat Thamkrabok in Saraburi, Thailand; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council urges the Minnesota Congressional Delegation and the State Department of the United States, under their full authority and with all possible speed, to pursue all appropriate actions with the Government of Thailand to identify the remains of the deceased and return them to their relatives living in Saint Paul; and

BE IT, FINALLY RESOLVED, that the City Council urges the Minnesota Congressional Delegation to work with the United States Ambassador to the United Nations to request urgent actions by the United Nations Human Rights Council and independent experts to eliminate racism and to promote tolerance of religion or belief, to demand that Thailand fulfill its international obligations and take all appropriate actions to halt further exhumations, to investigate the whereabouts of the remains that have been disinterred and to return those remains to family members.