

June 19, 2006

Questions regarding the Whereabouts of Bodies Exhumed at Wat Tham Krabok Monastery, Saraburi, Thailand in 2005-06

The Human Rights Program at the University of Minnesota is working to redress the desecration of Hmong graves that occurred in the last quarter of 2005 on the grounds of Wat Tham Krabok in Saraburi, Thailand. Our Program has received reports that at least 900 graves were systematically exhumed and the remains removed to unknown locations or cremated. Our Program sent a complaint to the United Nations Special Rapportuer on Religious Intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism condemning these exhumations as violation of international human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination, the right to manifest one's religion or belief, the right to culture and the right to family.

The Human Rights Program seeks to: (1) prevent further digging of graves at Wat Tham Krabok; (2) locate the whereabouts of the remains that have been exhumed; and (3) return the remains to family members.

In an effort to accomplish those objectives, we are seeking further reliable information regarding the following questions. Please send information directly to:

Barbara Frey, Director
Human Rights Program
University of Minnesota
214 Social Sciences Building
267 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455 USA

Tel: +1-612-626-1879
Fax: +1-612-626-2242
Email: freyx001@umn.edu
<http://hrp.cla.umn.edu/>

Exhumations

1. How many total graves of Hmong people and other people were on the land of Wat Tham Krabok Monastery and the immediate surrounding area before the exhumations that took place in October 2005?

2. How many graves have been exhumed at Wat Tham Krabok or the immediate surrounding area since December 2005? Are there plans to exhume further graves at Wat Tham Krabok?

3. Who was responsible for making the arrangements for the graves to be exhumed at Wat Tham Krabok in 2005? Please provide names and contact information.

4. Why were there two mass exhumations at Wat Tham Krabok?

5. How many Hmong graves remain in the Wat Tham Krabok compound in Saraburi, Thailand? Does the Monastery plan to exhume the remaining graves? If so, when will the exhumation take place and what will be done to the bodies after exhumation?

Organizations

6. How many total graves were exhumed in October 2005 by Bhoti Pavana Foundation? How many of those exhumed graves were of Hmong people and how many were of people of other ethnic or national origin?

7. How many graves were exhumed by Buddha Dhamma in December 2005? How many of those exhumed by Buddha Dhamma were graves of Hmong people and how many were of people of other ethnic or national descent?

8. Please identify the heads of each organization – Bhoti Pavana Foundation and Buddha Dhamma. What is the legal status of each organization in Thailand? Who oversees and approves their activities? How long have the organizations been in operation?

9. How do the two organizations fund their exhumation projects? Do the organizations receive donations? If so, from where do these donations originate? If not, how do the organizations fund their operations?

10. How many people participated in the Wat Tham Krabok grave exhumation? Were they paid laborers? If they were paid, how much money did they receive?

Cremation/Reburials

11. Did the organizations that carried out the exhumations – Bhoti Pavana Foundation and Buddha Dhamma - receive payment for exhuming the graves in October and December of 2005 in Wat Tham Krabok, Thailand? If so, how much did each organization receive and who paid them?

12. We have received a report of an interview with Monk PhraVijit in May 2006 in which he stated that the Bhoti Pavana Foundation transported the cremated ashes of 400 bodies to Bangkok. Please confirm the location of the ashes transferred by the Bhoti

Pavana Foundation and the number of bodies that were cremated. Does the Bhoti Pavana Foundation have physical control of the ashes?

13. Monk Phra Vijit of Wat Tham Krabok also reported that the Buddha Dhamma organization has physical control over the bodies that it exhumed in December 2005. If this report is true, please identify the location of the bodies under the control of Buddha Dhamma. What is the exact number of bodies from the Wat Tham Krabok exhumation that are being held by Buddha Dhamma? Have the bodies been identified? How are these bodies being held? How can families identify and reclaim these bodies?

14. According to the statement of the Thai Delegation at the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the ashes of the cremated bodies from Wat Tham Krabok were placed in Pothipowanasongkrau graveyard, in the Saraburi province. Please identify the number of bodies cremated and reburied in this graveyard. When did the cremation take place? When did the reburial take place? Please provide names and contact information for those responsible for the cremation and burial at Pothipowanasongkrau.

15. According to reports in the Thai media, three bodies exhumed from Wat Tham Krabok were found in a naturally mummified state. These bodies were not cremated or stored with the other bodies but were put on public display because of the belief that they would bring good luck. The media also stated that these bodies would be cremated on November 27, 2005. Were the mummified bodies cremated? If not, what is the current status of these bodies?

Notification

16. According to the statement of the Thai Delegation at the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other interviews with authorities at Wat Tham Krabok, members of the Hmong community were informed of the need to relocate the graves from the monastery grounds. Please identify who in the Hmong community was informed in advance of the exhumations. When and how were these people notified?

17. According to the statement of the Thai Delegation at the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, some Hmong family members reclaimed the remains of their relatives from Wat Tham Krabok for reburial. When were the remains reclaimed and relocated?

18. Have there been deaths among the Hmong refugees who remained at Wat Tham Krabok after December 2005? If so, please identify the deceased and explain what has been done with their bodies.

19. According to the statement of the Thai Delegation at the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Tham Krabok Foundation planned to convert the area in which Hmong graves were buried into a museum and public park.

Please explain the plans for this museum and identify and give contact information for the persons responsible for development of the project.

20. It is our understanding that the Tham Krabok Foundation is headquartered in Australia and is in fact a separate entity for Wat Tham Krabok. If this is true, did the officers of this organization know about the plans to remove graves from Wat Tham Krabok before October 2005?

Thai Government Involvement

21. What was the involvement of the Thai government in the exhumations at Wat Tham Krabok in 2005? Please identify and give contact information for the persons in the Thai government who had knowledge of the planning and exhumations of the Hmong graves at Wat Tham Krabok. What role did Thai officials have in planning the exhumations? Did the Thai government provide permits for, or authorize in any way, the exhumations that took place in October and December 2005? What persons in the government were present during the exhumations?

Contamination

22. According to the statement of the Thai Delegation at the Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Hmong graves at Wat Tham Krabok posed environmental risks to the surrounding ecology which directly affected the local population. Please identify the environmental risks and state how they were discovered.

23. Were any environmental tests performed on bodies of water on or near the Wat Tham Krabok compound? If so, please describe the tests, identify the persons conducting the tests, state when the tests were performed and provide the results of the tests.