



**The Lao People's Democratic Republic
Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review:
The Death Penalty**

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

and

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

**for the 49th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
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The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law since its founding in 1983. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States. In 1991, The Advocates adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty worldwide and organized a death penalty project to provide pro bono assistance on post-conviction appeals, as well as education and advocacy to end capital punishment. The Advocates currently holds a seat on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), an alliance of more than 150 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities, and unions, was created in Rome on 13 May 2002. The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its ultimate objective is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates for a definitive end to death sentences and executions in those countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking to obtain a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses the Lao People's Democratic Republic's compliance with its international human rights obligations with respect to the death penalty and related issues.
2. The Lao People's Revolutionary Party maintains a stronghold over Laos. It controls the political process, restricts civil liberties, and faces no opposing parties or organized opposition groups.¹
3. Laos is "abolitionist in practice," meaning that authorities have not carried out executions for any crime in the past ten years and "are believed to have a policy or established practice of not carrying out executions," even though courts continue to hand down death sentences.² Even though there are no reports of Laos carrying out any executions since 1989, laws still authorize the death penalty for a wide variety of offenses.³
4. The available information is limited, but women face particular risks with respect to the death penalty and related issues.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Ratification of & accession to international instruments; acceptance of international norms

Status of Implementation: Not Accepted, Not Implemented

5. In the third-cycle Universal Periodic Review, Laos noted eleven recommendations to ratify the Second Optional Protocol (OP2) to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is aimed at the abolition of the death penalty,⁴ asserting that these recommendations "are against the provisions of the Penal Code, which has newly been codified through extensive consultations, including the special debate and vote in the National Assembly specifically on maintaining the death penalty in the Penal Code. The decision to keep the death penalty as a result of majority vote in the National Assembly shall be respected and upheld. The remaining provisions of the Penal Code prescribe the death penalty in line with the article 6 of ICCPR." Laos ratified the ICCPR in 2009 but it has neither signed nor ratified or acceded to OP2.⁵
6. Laos also noted two recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).⁶ Laos ratified the Torture Convention in 2012 but has neither signed nor ratified or acceded to the OPCAT.⁷

Death penalty

Status of Implementation: Not Accepted, Not Implemented

7. In the third-cycle UPR, Laos noted fifteen recommendations related to: (1) enacting legislation abolishing the death penalty, including ratification of OP2; (2) maintaining the moratorium on executions, and making such moratorium official; (3) reducing the scope of offenses for which the death penalty may be imposed; and/or (4) commuting capital punishment to imprisonment,⁸ contending that the National Assembly had recently

adopted a new Penal Code further entrenching the death penalty, and asserting that the Penal Code was consistent with Article 6 of the ICCPR.⁹

8. Authorities have not carried out any executions since 1989, but the law preserves the death penalty for a wide variety of offenses.¹⁰ Laos has also abstained from multiple votes on the UN General Assembly resolution calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, most recently in 2022.¹¹
9. Laos' Penal Code authorizes the death penalty for a range of crimes not involving an intentional killing, including drug trafficking, drug possession, terrorism, disrupting industry, trade, agriculture or other economic activities with the intent of undermining the national economy, treason, and espionage. According to the World Coalition against Death Penalty, Laos holds approximately 315 people under sentence of death,¹² 311 of whom were convicted for drug-related crimes.¹³ In 2020, authorities sentenced eight people, including three women, to death in connection with a drug trafficking ring.¹⁴ A report identified the individuals only with first names.¹⁵ Two of the women are wives of two of the men implicated and sentenced in connection with the drug trafficking ring.¹⁶ Also in 2020, courts sentenced at least 13 Laotian nationals—ten men and three women—to death, and the youngest person sentenced to death at the time was 19 years old as of the date of sentencing.¹⁷
10. In 2023, Amnesty International observed that partial government disclosures regarding death sentences suggest that the country “resorted to the death penalty extensively [in 2022], but it was impossible on the basis of this incomplete information to determine estimates for the year.”¹⁸ Similarly, Amnesty International was unable to report even an estimated number of people under sentence of death as of the end of 2023.¹⁹ Authorities do not disclose transparent information about death penalty practices.²⁰
11. Furthermore, Laos does not disaggregate death penalty data by gender or sex, impeding efforts to document and analyze the role of gender in Laos' death penalty practices.²¹ In response to the CEDAW Committee's 2023 List of Issues, requesting “information on the cases of women who are currently sentenced to death in [Laos],”²² Laos simply asserted without evidence that “in practice, there has never been a case of death sentence for the offender (prisoner) in the past, but it will be changed to life imprisonment.”²³
12. The Penal Code authorizes the death penalty for women, with the exception of women who were pregnant at the time of the offense, women nursing a child up to three years of age, and juvenile offenders.²⁴ The law also exempts people with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities and persons over the age of sixty from the death penalty.²⁵ The Penal Code provides that self-defense can be a basis for reducing a criminal penalty, including the death penalty.²⁶

Freedom of opinion and expression

13. The law recognizes freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, but in practice the government severely restricts political speech and writing and prohibits most public criticism it deemed harmful to its reputation, presumably including criticism of the government's death penalty practices. The law forbids slandering the state, distorting party or state policies, inciting disorder, or propagating information or opinions that weaken the state.²⁷

14. In November 2023, a group of young artists were forced to make a public apology for an artistic performance that offended many Buddhists because it took place at a famous national landmark during a Buddhist festival. Police opened an investigation into the incident and the group could face “re-education.”²⁸
15. Several non-governmental organizations report that people are taught at an early age not to criticize the government.²⁹

Freedom of association

16. The law tightly restricts freedom of association, prohibiting political groups that the ruling party has not approved. NGOs face burdensome registration processes and reporting requirements, with the government occasionally influencing board membership. Some organizations are forced to change their names to remove terms that authorities deem sensitive, such as “rights.”³⁰
17. Authorities restrict NGOs’ ability to share information and conduct activities. NGOs must obtain Ministry of Foreign Affairs approval to receive foreign funding greater than 500 million kip (\$24,000). They are also required to accept government “advice and assistance” to ensure their operations align with party policy and the law.³¹
18. The coauthors are not aware of any NGOs based in Laos that openly express opposition to the death penalty. Individual human rights defenders have generally been unwilling to speak out against the death penalty in international forums.

Administration of justice and fair trial; Good Governance & corruption; Access to justice & remedy; Equality & non-discrimination

Status of Implementation: Accepted, Not Implemented

19. Laos accepted five recommendations to promote the rule of law and improve the judicial system, including to enhance its independence and to ensure full and effective access to judicial remedies to vulnerable people and minorities.³²
20. Under Article 35 of the Law on Criminal Procedure, “the law requires that defendants facing capital punishment be represented by a ‘protector.’ A protector is defined as a lawyer, a representative of an organization, or a close relative of the accused who ‘participates in the proceedings to protect the rights and interests’ of the defendant. Protectors have the same rights and obligations as legal counsel, including the right to appeal decisions. If a death-penalty defendant has no protector, the court is required to appoint a lawyer.”³³
21. According to the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, however, in practice “this legal requirement does not translate into effective representation. Incommunicado detention is a common occurrence, with prisoners unable to contact their families or lawyers. There are also a limited number of independent lawyers in the country.”³⁴
22. Cornell also reports “a low level of practical lawyering skills in the country. Moreover, the concept of a lawyer as advocate is not widely understood by the public or within the justice system, including by judges, the police, and sometimes lawyers themselves. Because of the widespread perception that lawyers cannot affect court decisions, most

defendants do not choose to be represented by professionals. There are a limited number of independent lawyers in the country.”³⁵

23. Cornell observes that “[c]riminal trials in the Lao DPR do not meet the fundamental requirements of fairness. By law defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence; however, judges often decide the outcome of a case in advance, based on police or prosecution reports, and most criminal trials are described as ‘pro forma examinations of the accused.’”³⁶
24. Cornell further points out that “[a]ll of the country’s judges are members of the ruling party, and most have had ‘only basic legal training.’”³⁷
25. According to Freedom House’s 2023 country report,³⁸ “[d]ue process rights are outlined in law but routinely denied in practice. Defendants are often presumed guilty, and long procedural delays in the judicial system are common. Appeals processes are often nonexistent or delayed, sometimes indefinitely. Warrantless searches and arbitrary arrests also occur.”³⁹
26. Women, particularly women from ethnic minority groups, may experience even more difficulty accessing their fair trial rights. Laos lacks sufficient qualified attorneys to provide legal services to women in conflict with the law, and the criminal legal system presents many procedural hurdles hindering women’s ability to receive a fair trial, such as barriers hindering women defendants from contacting their lawyers and constraints on the amount of time women can spend with their attorneys to develop legal strategies and to plan to gather evidence.⁴⁰ These hurdles pose an even greater challenge to non-Lao-speaking women from ethnic minority groups.⁴¹

Conditions of detention

27. Conditions in prisons and detention facilities can be harsh or even life-threatening due to the inadequate supply of food, space, and medical care.⁴² According to Freedom House’s 2023 country report, “[p]rison conditions are substandard, with reports of inadequate food and medical facilities. Prisoners are also subject to torture.”⁴³ According to some reports, people in detention sometimes have to rely on families and friends for basic necessities such as food.⁴⁴ Overcrowding may lead to the spreading of disease, and most prisons are short on medical staff and supplies.⁴⁵ The exact gender composition of the prison population is currently unknown.⁴⁶ Additionally, there is little insight into the availability of prison accommodations tailored to women’s specific needs, such as privacy and safety.

Discrimination against women

28. Documentation on the application of the death penalty to women is limited. Media reports indicate that since the previous UPR, authorities have sentenced at least three women to death for drug-related offences; two are described as the “wives” of other defendants, and one was reportedly 19 at the time of the sentence.⁴⁷ According to the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide, in the context of drug-related offenses, on a global scale women are uniquely vulnerable to being sentenced to death, and in several countries women are most likely to be sentenced to death for such crimes.⁴⁸ It is

not clear whether coercive control or other gender-related factors played a role in the involvement of these “wives” or the 19-year-old in the alleged offenses.

29. Because the law authorizes and under some circumstances mandates the death penalty for drug-related offenses, women are at heightened risk of human rights violations. These mandatory sentences for drug-related offenses do not allow courts to take into account mitigating factors such as poverty, coercive control, gender-based violence, manipulation, and the survival needs of a family.
30. Article 40 of the Penal Code identifies circumstances conducive to the Reduction of Penal Responsibilities. “Circumstances conducive to the reduction of penal responsibilities are: (1) an offender is less than eighteen years old; (2) a female offender’s state of pregnancy; (3) a legitimate defense; (4) an offence committed under the strong emotional shock generated by an illegal act of the victim; (5) an offence committed under force or threat; (6) an offender acts to prevent damage from being caused by his offence or compensates for the damage voluntarily and in good faith; (7) an offence committed because of the offender’s own or of his family’s seriously difficult situation; (8) an offender expresses remorse and surrenders to officials, and acknowledges and reveals offences committed by himself and others; (9) a first offence, if it does not cause serious danger to society; and (10) an offender has shown merit towards the nation. In the prescription of penalties, the court might take into consideration other factors not provided in this article but which would commonly be considered relevant to reduce penal responsibilities.” Other than pregnancy, none of these circumstances is sex- or gender-specific.
31. It is unclear whether Article 40 allows for the court to circumvent mandatory death sentences for drug-related offenses for women in conflict with the law.
32. The Cornell Center has documented cases showing violations of women’s right to a fair trial in capital cases. A study conducted in 2021 demonstrated that “fair trial principles dictate that courts should consider all relevant mitigating circumstances before imposing a sentence. In practice, however, many courts neglect gender-specific mitigation, and in states that impose a mandatory death penalty,” such as Laos with respect to certain drug-related offenses and terrorism-related offenses,⁴⁹ “courts may not consider any mitigating circumstances at all.”⁵⁰ Women are at an elevated risk of being sentenced to death without consideration of gender-based violence or coercive control as a mitigating factor.
33. The Executive Director of Harm Reduction International has observed that “[p]eople on death row for drug offences tend to be involved at the lowest level of the drug trade, and are generally marginalized in society. Gender, socio-economic position, ethnicity and foreign status in a country add intersectional vulnerability to this context.”⁵¹ She explains that although “some women engage in the drug trade through their own volition, for others, a narrower range of choices, along with poverty, coercion, violence, manipulation, and the survival needs of a family play a significant factor in their involvement.”⁵² Research from the Cornell Center illustrates “the alarming extent to which women sentenced to death for drug offences experienced gender bias in criminal proceedings and violations of their right to a fair trial.”⁵³
34. Moreover, according to an earlier 2018 study by the Cornell Center, women are more likely to receive a death sentence when the adjudicating authority perceives that they are

violating entrenched gender norms, being cast as the “female fatale” or the “witch.” Women are often put on trial not only for acts they performed but also for allegedly being “a bad wife, a bad mother, and a bad woman.”⁵⁴

Violence against women; Gender-based violence; Domestic violence

35. In the 2021 study, the Cornell Center found that, in the global context, women are more vulnerable and most likely to be sentenced to death for criminal offenses committed within the context of gender-based violence and manipulative or coercive relationships with male co-defendants.⁵⁵ Cornell’s data indicate that most women under sentence of death have been sentenced to death for the crime of murder.⁵⁶ These women have overwhelmingly experienced prolonged domestic violence at the hands of a partner, spouse, or another family member.⁵⁷
36. Many women under sentence of death are survivors of gender-based violence and come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.⁵⁸ At a global level, sentencing courts typically fail to take into account a defendant’s experience as a survivor of gender-based violence or a victim of a manipulative or coercive relationship (for example in cases where women are pressured or tricked into transporting drugs) as mitigating factors during sentencing.⁵⁹ Research indicates that courts also fail to account for power dynamics and tactics of coercive control that may affect a woman’s involvement in and culpability for a crime.
37. The 2023 Freedom House report confirms that in Laos, “gender-based discrimination and violence are widespread,” limiting women’s access to education and employment opportunities, thereby further hindering their ability to protect themselves from discrimination in the criminal legal system.⁶⁰

Non-citizens

38. Laos is a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, but in practice, the extent to which Laos upholds its consular notification obligations may vary. There have been reports suggesting occasional lapses in notifying consulates or embassies about the detention of their nationals.

Human rights defenders

39. In October 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders urged authorities “not to deport people, including human rights defenders, to countries where there are substantial grounds to believe that they would face an imminent risk of enforced disappearance, torture, summary execution and other grave human rights violations.”⁶¹
40. This warning followed reports that in September 2023, authorities in Laos deported prominent Chinese human rights defender and lawyer, Lu Siwei, to the People’s Republic of China where Chinese authorities may subject him to serious harm, including enforced disappearance. Lu had a history of taking on sensitive cases and of navigating the fraught and murky waters of defending people whom authorities deemed to be political targets.⁶²

41. In 2016, authorities arrested three activists, Ms. Lodkham Thammavong, Mr. Soukane Chaithad, and Mr. Somphone Phimmasone, after they protested against the government in Thailand and posted critical messages on social media. In 2017, after a secret trial during which they were denied access to legal representation, a court sentenced them to up to 20 years in prison. It's unclear whether these individuals expressed opposition to the death penalty, but their experiences highlight the threats to human rights defenders who speak out against government human rights violations.⁶³

Right to an effective remedy

42. All judges in Laos are members of the ruling party. The ruling party exerts systemic influence over judges, and the country's justice system is not independent from political influence. The judiciary often fails to provide procedural protections for persons charged with capital crimes.⁶⁴ People charged with capital crimes often experience violations of their right to due process, and delays are common across all stages of court proceedings, including trials and appeals.⁶⁵ As a result, parties often resolve disputes outside of the judicial system, resulting in unfair outcomes.⁶⁶ People therefore have little confidence in the judicial system and often choose not to have attorneys represent them in judicial proceedings due to the "general perception that attorneys cannot influence court decisions."⁶⁷

43. Although the law states that people charged with capital offenses shall be entitled to legal representation, people so charged often face barriers to accessing legal representation.⁶⁸ First, Laos has an insufficient supply of qualified attorneys to provide such legal services.⁶⁹ Further, procedural hurdles make it difficult for people to contact their lawyers and constrain the amount of time attorney and client have together to develop legal strategies and to plan to gather evidence.⁷⁰ The quality of legal services is often low and underdeveloped, and stakeholders in the justice system, including police and judges, often have a limited understanding of the role of lawyers within the system.⁷¹

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

44. This stakeholder report suggests the following recommendations for the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic:

- Abolish the death penalty and replace it with penalties that are fair, proportionate, and consistent with international human rights standards.
- Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.
- In the interim:
 - On at least an annual basis, publish statistics about people sentenced to death over the previous five years, disaggregated by sex/gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, crime of conviction, relationship to any codefendants or victims, age of any dependent children, occupation at the time of the offense, status of any appeals or requests for clemency, and current location.
 - Institute an official moratorium on executions.

- Commute existing death sentences to terms of imprisonment.
 - Prohibit courts from sentencing any person to death for any crime in which the person accused is not proven to have committed an intentional killing, consistent with international human rights standards.
 - Issue a directive to all sentencing authorities in capital cases ensuring that they hear evidence on and take into account any mitigating circumstances warranting a penalty other than death.
 - Take steps to provide heightened fair trial and due process safeguards in capital cases involving women defendants, including by providing them with access to effective legal representation with experience in capital cases and with training on women's issues.
 - Ensure that all people at risk of being sentenced to death receive competent and independent legal assistance and representation.
 - In collaboration with civil society, undertake a public awareness raising campaign about the death penalty, including human rights concerns as well as the absence of any unique deterrent effect.
 - Codify gender-specific defenses and extenuating circumstances in capital cases, encompassing women's experiences of trauma, poverty, and gender-based violence.
 - Ensure that all judicial officers responsible for sentencing in capital cases receive comprehensive training on gender-based discrimination, gender-based violence, and tactics of coercive control that may lead to women committing death-eligible offenses.
 - Provide training to all defense counsel who take on capital cases regarding gender-specific mitigation and extenuating circumstances and how to raise discrimination against clients on the basis of their gender, when appropriate.
- In collaboration with civil society, conduct a comprehensive study on women in conflict with the law in Laos, with particular focus on women charged with capital crimes and related issues.
 - Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.
 - Provide sufficient resources and funding for the appointment of competent, independent lawyers and judges.
 - Amend the Penal Code to bring it in line with the Convention Against Torture and international human rights standards regarding torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
 - Ensure that detention conditions comply with the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules, specifically regarding access to food and women's needs for privacy and safety.

- Eliminate burdensome registration and funding requirements for non-governmental organizations.
- Ensure that no non-governmental organization faces harassment or negative legal consequences for advocating for human rights.
- Create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations, particularly those expressing opposition to the death penalty.

¹ *Laos: Freedom in the World Report 2023*, Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/laos/freedom-world/2023>.

² Amnesty International, *Laos: Human Rights Denied 2020*, p. 8, January 2020 (First Published July 2019). Available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA2610242019ENGLISH.pdf>.

³ *Abolitionist in Practice*, WORLD COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, May 23, 2023, <https://worldcoalition.org/pays/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/>.

⁴ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, (Mar. 17, 2020), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/6. ¶115.1 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Belgium) (Cyprus) (Estonia) (Honduras). ¶115.2 Consider acceding to or ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, as previously recommended (Slovenia); Step up efforts to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Uruguay); Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, considering Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Paraguay). ¶115.3 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty and enact legislation abolishing the death penalty for all crimes and in all circumstances (Croatia). ¶115.4 Establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty with a view to ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Australia). ¶115.5 Fully abolish the death penalty and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Iceland).

⁵ United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Status of Ratification, Interaction Dashboard: <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

⁶ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, (Mar. 17, 2020), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/6. ¶115.15 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Cyprus) (Denmark) (Honduras). ¶115.16 Consider accession to the Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Sri Lanka). ¶115.17 Ratify and implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and establish an independent, efficient and well-resourced national preventive mechanism with powers to conduct unimpeded visits to all places of detention (Croatia); Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic: Addendum*, (Sept. 16, 2020), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/6/Add. 1.

⁷ United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Status of Ratification, Interactive Dashboard: <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

⁸ ¶115.1 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Belgium) (Cyprus) (Estonia) (Honduras). ¶115.2 Consider acceding to or ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, as previously recommended (Slovenia); Step up efforts to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Uruguay);

Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, considering Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Paraguay). ¶115.3 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty and enact legislation abolishing the death penalty for all crimes and in all circumstances (Croatia). ¶115.4 Establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty with a view to ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Australia). ¶115.5 Fully abolish the death penalty and ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Iceland). ¶115.59 Abolish the death penalty (Canada) (Portugal). ¶115.60 Take measures aimed at the definitive abolition of the death penalty (Luxembourg). ¶115.61 Consider abolishing the death penalty for all crimes in all circumstances (Malta). ¶115.62 Consider taking further action towards the abolition of the death penalty (New Zealand). ¶115.63 Enact legislation abolishing the death penalty for all crimes and in all circumstances, following on from the revision of the Penal Code, which reduces the scope of offences for which the death penalty may be imposed (Ireland). ¶115.64 Introduce a de jure moratorium on executions, with a view to the complete abolition of the death penalty (Italy). ¶115.65 Establish an official moratorium on the application of the death penalty, as a preliminary step to its final abolition, and modify the Penal Code to reduce the number of crimes for which capital punishment can be imposed (Spain). ¶115.66 Take the necessary steps to repeal the death penalty from its national legislation (Argentina). ¶115.67 Consider an official moratorium on the death penalty, as a first step towards the abolition of capital punishment (Brazil). ¶115.68 Officially establish a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it, and commute capital punishment to imprisonment (France). ¶115.69 Maintain the moratorium on executions and abolish the death penalty (Czechia).

⁹ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic: Addendum, (Sept. 16, 2020), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/44/6/Add. 1.

¹⁰ *Abolitionist in Practice*, WORLD COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, May 23, 2023, <https://worldcoalition.org/pays/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/>.

¹¹ Amnesty International, Laos: Human Rights Denied 2020, p. 8, January 2020 (First Published July 2019). Available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA2610242019ENGLISH.pdf>. See also *Abolitionist in Practice*, WORLD COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, May 23, 2023, <https://worldcoalition.org/pays/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/>; *9th Resolution for a moratorium on the death penalty: the trend is growing*, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Dec. 20, 2022, <https://worldcoalition.org/2022/12/20/9th-resolution-for-a-moratorium-on-the-death-penalty-the-trend-is-growing/>.

¹² *Abolitionist in Practice*, WORLD COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, May 23, 2023, <https://worldcoalition.org/pays/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/>.

¹³ *Lao People's Democratic Republic*, CORNELL CENTER ON THE DEATH PENALTY WORLDWIDE, April 1, 2011, <https://deathpenaltyworldwide.org/database/#/results/country?id=40>.

¹⁴ Radio Free Asia, Laos Sentences Eight Members of Mr. X Drug Ring to Death, accessed on Jun. 1st, 2023, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-mr-x-drug-ring-8-death-penalty-01272020154027.html>.

¹⁵ Radio Free Asia, Laos Sentences Eight Members of Mr. X Drug Ring to Death, accessed on Jun. 1st, 2023, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-mr-x-drug-ring-8-death-penalty-01272020154027.html>.

¹⁶ Radio Free Asia, Laos Sentences Eight Members of Mr. X Drug Ring to Death, accessed on Jun. 1st, 2023, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/laos-mr-x-drug-ring-8-death-penalty-01272020154027.html>.

¹⁷ Harm Reduction International, The Death Penalty for Drug Offences: Global Overview 2020, available at: [HRI_Death_Penalty_Report_2020_FINAL.pdf](https://www.hri.org/sites/default/files/HRI_Death_Penalty_Report_2020_FINAL.pdf).

¹⁸ Amnesty International. (2022). *Death Sentences and Executions 2021* (Report), 24. Available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/5418/2022/en/>.

¹⁹ Amnesty International. (2024). *Death Sentences and Executions 2023* (Report), 21. Available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/7952/2024/en/>.

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- ²⁰ See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding Observations on the Combined Eighth and Ninth Periodic Report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, (Nov. 14, 2018), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, ¶ 16(c).
- ²¹ Amnesty International. (2022). *Death Sentences and Executions 2021* (Report), 13. Available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/5418/2022/en/>.
- ²² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the tenth periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic* (14 Nov. 2023), UN Doc. CEDAW/C/LAO/Q/10, ¶ 4.
- ²³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Replies of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the list of issues and questions in relation to its tenth periodic report* (11 June 2024), UN Doc. CEDAW/C/LAO/RQ/10, ¶ 9.
- ²⁴ Lao People's Democratic Republic on the Promulgation of the Penal code, (Jun. 26, 2017), art. 51, Available at: https://laoofficialgazette.gov.la/kcfinder/upload/files/1Oct2020_Lao%20Penal%20Code_English%20version.pdf.
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