

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences**

Ref.: UA LAO 4/2025  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

17 October 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 51/15.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning **the potentially life-threatening situation of** [REDACTED] and I urgently seek your support to ensure his protection.

According to the information received:

[REDACTED] is a Syrian national and a member of the [REDACTED] minority. He is currently facing a life-threatening situation and at imminent risk of physical and mental harm. [REDACTED] has been subjected to forced labour, including forced criminality, threat of violence and coercion, and a lack of freedom of movement. He is facing a serious risk of reprisals.

[REDACTED]'s passport was confiscated by his former employer and we understand that it is currently being withheld by the police. [REDACTED] was expelled from the company he had been working for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Furthermore, employees of the company discovered that he had communicated with OHCHR and other organizations. He is now stranded in [REDACTED] Laos, with no valid identity documents or financial means, struggling to secure food, water, accommodation, and clothing. He is living under severe stress, in fear of reprisals from his former supervisors and other individuals associated with the company, and in a highly vulnerable situation.

[REDACTED] also fears being arrested and forcibly returned to Syria, where, as a member of the [REDACTED] minority, he would face grave and immediate risks to his life and physical integrity. [REDACTED] requires immediate protection and humanitarian assistance to ensure his safety, assistance in recovering his passport and in leaving Laos safely.

Background of the case

[REDACTED] arrived in Laos [REDACTED] He travelled to Laos after having been promised a job. Upon arrival, however, he was reportedly taken directly to a building where he would be working. He had not been informed of the true nature of the work in advance. Shortly after his arrival, his passport was confiscated, and he was not allowed to move freely.

It is further reported that Chinese supervisors exercised full control over the workers' movements and communications. They were allegedly forced to engage daily in online fraud from 4 p.m. until 5 a.m. under extreme pressure and fear, without proper rest, pay, or other labour rights. When workers objected, they were subjected to verbal threats or physical assault. ██████ personally witnessed two workers being beaten for refusing to comply with the rules imposed.

On ██████, the Lao police arrived and collected the workers' passports and ██████, the police returned and asked for their personal information. The Chinese supervisors had warned them not to speak to the police, claiming that they were paying the police and were in control of the situation.

Recently, a meeting was held at ██████'s workplace after he protested against the abusive treatment and forced labour conditions. He was instructed to hand over his work ID card and was expelled from the company. When he returned to collect his belongings, his phone was searched. Allegedly, company supervisors discovered the conversation he had with OHCHR and other organizations, and he is now very afraid of possible reprisals from them.

██████ went to the police to request the return of his passport. However, when trying to cross a checkpoint, he was reportedly told by the police to contact his company supervisors in order to retrieve his passport. Based on the exploitation suffered, ██████ does not trust the company and did not contact his previous supervisors. ██████, ██████ was told by the police that he needed to go to the Immigration Office to retrieve his passport. However, he does not have access to that area due to a checkpoint which cannot be passed without a passport.

Based on information received by my team, ██████ does not intend to stay in Laos and wishes to leave the country safely once he has been able to recover his passport.

The company where ██████ worked – the exact name of which is not known to me – is reportedly located inside Wanlong Apartment (万隆公寓), directly opposite 6598 Club (6598会所).

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, I would like to express my **utmost concern about the alleged trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labour suffered by ██████ and the life-threatening and imminent risks he is currently facing. These refer to potential – reprisals by his former employers, the withholding of his passport, being stranded in Laos without access to basic necessities, and the risk of detention and forcible return to Syria, where he would face grave and immediate threats to his life and physical integrity.**

**Currently, ██████ is facing a lack of access to protection and humanitarian assistance which requires your Excellency's Government's urgent attention. I strongly emphasize that any detention or deportation of ██████ would be inconsistent with international human rights standards and obligations.**

I wish to highlight the obligations emanating from article 6 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), concerning assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in persons, as well as the effective implementation of the obligation of criminalization for trafficking in persons for all its purposes (article 5). We further highlight the obligation on States to establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures, to “prevent and combat trafficking in persons” (article 9(1)(a)), and to ensure consistency with, “internationally recognized principles of non-discrimination” in all measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.

I also wish to urge your Excellency’s Government to effectively implement the non-punishment principle, and in particular the obligation to ensure a prompt and effective identification of victims of trafficking in order for the principle to be effectively applied. I recall that under the non-punishment principle, victims of human trafficking should not be punished for unlawful acts they were compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being trafficked. This ensures that victims are treated as victims of crime rather than as offenders. In this context, under the Palermo Protocol States have an obligation to ensure that, “the principle of non-punishment is applied to: (a) All forms of trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced criminality, as well as to both cases of international trafficking and cases of internal trafficking; (b) Any unlawful activity carried out by a trafficked person as a direct consequence of their trafficking situation regardless of the gravity or seriousness of the offence committed; (c) Criminal, civil, administrative and immigration offences, as well as other forms of punishment, [...] ; (d) Any situation of deprivation of liberty, including immigration detention and detention pending removal, transfer or return proceedings.” (A/HRC/47/34, para. 57).

Further, I wish to highlight that any failure to provide assistance and protection to victims of trafficking in persons, would be a violation of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, notably article 14 regarding obligations of identification, assistance and protection of victims, especially article 14(7) regarding non-punishment principle, and article 16 on law enforcement and prosecution. Further, we highlight the obligations arising under article 16(2) of the ASEAN Convention, to detect, deter and punish corruption, that contributes to trafficking in persons.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, I would appreciate a response as soon as possible on the initial steps taken by your Excellency’s Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned individual in compliance with international instruments.

**Specifically, I urge your Excellency’s Government to immediately ensure the protection of ██████████ and to provide humanitarian assistance while facilitating the return of his passport and his safe departure from Laos.**

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human

Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I would also be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the actions Your Excellency's Government has taken or will take to ensure that [REDACTED] has effective access to protection and humanitarian assistance.
3. Please inform what action has been taken by the police or any other entity to return [REDACTED]'s passport.
4. Please highlight any measures taken by the Government of Laos, including in cooperation with other States/entities in the region, to halt the operation of companies which engage in forced labour and other criminal behavior in its territory. Please also specify if any members of such companies have been arrested and prosecuted and if so, for which crimes.
5. Please provide information about any measures/policies put in place by your Excellency's Government to assist victims of trafficking in persons who are seeking access to international protection.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Tomoya Obokata  
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and  
consequences