



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF R2P IMPLEMENTATION 2023



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Responsibility to Protect

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LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) continues to be among the weakest performers in the Asia Pacific region when it comes to the implementation of R2P. It performs strongest in relation to the protection of populations from atrocity crimes and the reduction of overall risks. It also does relatively well in relation to the adoption of international human rights laws considered most pertinent to R2P and participates constructively in the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council.

Laos has not changed its ratification status of international treaties relevant to R2P. In principle, the Constitution and numerous laws ensure equal access to judicial institutions and the protection of vulnerable groups, but this continues to not translate into widespread practice. This is particularly marked regarding minority ethnic groups, especially the Hmong, who are unable to freely express their cultural and religious identity for fear of persecution.

Laos performs relatively weakly on most domestic measures, and this reflects the constricted civil and political freedoms evident in the country. Civil society remains heavily restricted and the education sector is not well attuned to addressing the underlying causes of atrocity crimes.

Internationally, Laos has maintained its ambivalent stance towards R2P. Although Laos took part in Thailand's informal dialogue with Myanmar, this was widely criticised by the international community as "legitimising the junta". Laos has not contributed to UN peacekeeping operations and little evidence could be found of it engaging with the norm at a regional level.

Laos has continued to display considerable reservations about R2P and faces critical challenges at home that hinder its effective implementation of the norm.

Its index score is unchanged from 2022.

| Thematic Area | Indicator | Assessment | Notes |
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| Basic Compliance | Protection of populations from atrocity crimes. | Strong Unchanged | The communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) retains strict control over the lives of Laotian citizens. ¹ This control does offer its population protection from atrocity crimes, although discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities, particularly the Hmong, is an ongoing concern. ² |
| | Reduction of atrocity crime risks. | Strong Unchanged | Human rights violations, widespread corruption and impunity, and a lack of civil space are all issues present in Laos that could contribute to a climate of increased risk of atrocities. Yet, despite these shortcomings, the chances of atrocity crimes occurring in the country at present remain relatively low according to an atrocity risk assessment in 2021. ³ |
| | Dealing with past atrocities. | Very Weak Unchanged | Ongoing violence against those of the Hmong ethnicity continues within Laos. This is a continuation of the Secret War, ⁴ and many Hmong that have remained in Laos since that time have continued to be victimised by the LPRP, who continues to regard the Hmong with suspicion. Some Hmong continue low-level insurgencies against the government to this day, increasing the potential for wider violence and atrocities. While not directly related to atrocity crimes, the aftereffects of the bombing campaign carried out in the Secret War are still central to the lives of many Laotians today. Unexploded munitions account for large numbers of deaths and injuries each year and contribute to food insecurity in the rural population, due to a reliance on food tilled from soil filled with unexploded bombs. ⁵ Operations to clear such munitions are hampered by lack of funds and a corrupt and restricted operating environment under the LPRP. |
| Policy Mechanisms | Appoint national R2P Focal Point. | Very Weak Unchanged | There remains no R2P Focal Point in Laos. ⁶ |
| | Incorporate atrocity crime risks and dynamics into conflict | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos has not integrated atrocity crime risks into conflict analysis or development partnerships, |

¹ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/415610_LAOS-2022-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf.

² Unrepresented Nations & People Organization (UNPO), 2021. *Hmong in Isolation: Atrocities against the indigenous Hmong in the Xaisomboun Region of Laos*, <https://unpo.org/downloads/2705.pdf>; Martin, Maria Carmen, 2018. *The Hmong Crisis: The Secret Tragedy of Laos*, <http://www.sirjournal.org/blogs/2018/2/4/the-hmong-crisis-the-secret-tragedy-of-laos>.

³ For more information, see: Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P), 2021. *Atrocity Crimes Risk Assessment Series Volume 15: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/6317/Risk_Assessment_laos_vol15_march2021.pdf.

⁴ The Secret War was waged by the U.S in tandem with the Vietnam War to protect Laos from falling to communist forces. The CIA led a decades long operation, training the Hmong ethnic group to fight both the communist Laotian forces and the North Vietnamese who supported them. After the fall of Laos to the communists, many Hmong fled to the U.S or Thailand, where their actions fighting for the U.S is still largely unknown. Those Hmong that stayed in Laos have suffered generational discrimination and violence at the hands of LPRP authorities.

⁵ O'Connor, Juliette, 2020. *'Bombies': Legacies of the Secret War in Laos*, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseih/2020/02/11/bombies-legacies-of-the-secret-war-in-laos/>. For an assessment of the economic impacts of unexploded munitions on Laotian communities, see: Riano, Juan Felipe, Felipe Valencia Caicedo, 2020. *Apocalypse Laos: The devastating legacy of the 'Secret War'*, <https://voxeu.org/article/devastating-legacy-secret-war-laos>.

⁶ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), 2020. *Members of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/members-of-the-global-network-of-r2p-focal-points/>.

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| | analysis and/or development partnerships. | | although development partnerships may focus on protecting human rights more generally. |
| | Establish domestic mechanisms to hold the government accountable for upholding its responsibility to protect. | Very Weak Unchanged | There remains no evidence of Laos having established such domestic mechanisms. |
| International Human Rights Obligations | Sign, ratify and implement relevant instruments of international law. | Fair Unchanged | Laos has signed nine of the 12 most relevant pieces of international human rights law relevant to R2P. There has been no update on the other three, these being: the <i>1951 Refugee Convention</i> and its <i>1967 Protocol</i> , the <i>Arms Trade Treaty [ATT]</i> , and the <i>Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</i> . |
| | Sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and cooperate fully with the Court. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos has not signed or ratified the <i>Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</i> . ⁷ In March 2016, the Coalition for the ICC made Laos its monthly focus for its global justice campaign, citing its current (at the time) chairmanship of ASEAN to be an auspicious time for the country to show leadership in the region and sign the Statute. ⁸ Laos has not yet signed the Statute. |
| | Establish and maintain National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos currently lacks a national human rights institution, despite repeated recommendations, particularly during the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, urging the country to establish one. ⁹ In 2018, the Human Rights Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights noted that certain government bodies within the country possessed human rights mandates, but stated that none of them were independent and in line with the Paris Principles. ¹⁰ |
| | Ensure domestic promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on the elimination of discrimination. | Weak Unchanged | Laos remains a one-party State under the LPRP, which continues to exercise strict control over the country. The constitution may provide for the protection of freedoms, but in practice many of these are not respected. ¹¹ While the constitution prohibits discrimination regarding ethnicity, discrimination against ethnic minorities within the country, especially against those of the Hmong group, is widespread, and includes the redistribution of land for economic projects without the consultation of the host populations. Religious minorities, mainly Christians, were also subject to discrimination and harassment by the authorities for practicing their faith. ¹² There was no law prohibiting discrimination along sexual or gender identities, and gender-based discrimination and violence is widespread. ¹³ |

⁷ International Criminal Court (ICC), n.d. *The States Parties to the Rome Statute*, https://asp.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/asp/states%20parties/pages/the%20states%20parties%20to%20the%20rome%20statute.aspx#L.

⁸ Coalition for the International Criminal Court, 2016. *Laos: Show leadership in ASEAN by joining ICC*, <https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/news/20160309/laos-show-leadership-asean-joining-icc>.

⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Universal Periodic Review - Lao People's Democratic Republic*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/la-index>.

¹⁰ United Nations, Human Rights Committee (ICCPR), Concluding observations on the initial report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 23 November 2018, CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1, paras. 7-8.

¹¹ Amnesty International, 2018. *Laos: 2017/2018*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/laos/report-laos/>.

¹² Freedom House, 2023. *Freedom in the World 2023: Laos*, 'D. Freedom of Expression and Belief,' 'F. Rule of Law', <https://freedomhouse.org/country/laos/freedom-world/2023>; United Nations, Human Rights Council, Compilation on the Lao People's Democratic Republic: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, 4 November 2019, A/HRC/WG.6/35/LAO/2, p. 3.

¹³ Freedom House, 2023. *Freedom in the World 2023: Laos*, 'F. Rule of Law', <https://freedomhouse.org/country/laos/freedom-world/2023>.

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| Participate in international peer review processes, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council. | Strong Unchanged | Underreporting is most likely present due to pervasive social stigma around violence. ¹⁴ Laos remains an active participant in the UPR process, undertaking its third review in January 2020. Laos made note in its submission that it will continue to interact with UN human rights processes and is committed to promoting human rights within its borders, as well as receiving assistance from development partners. ¹⁵ |
| Cooperate fully with UN Human Rights mandate holders and those of relevant regional organisations. | Weak Unchanged | Laos accepted a total of 160 recommendations at its third review, noting a further 83 and rejecting none. ¹⁶ Laos still retains three reports overdue for international treaty procedures. ¹⁷ In 2019 there were two country visits by UN mandate holders (the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, ¹⁸ and the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children). ¹⁹ Other requests of the country by the UN are either inactive or impending. One of the concrete deliverables from Laos' dialogue on human rights with the EU in June 2023 was for Laos to extend an invitation to a UN mandate holder before the next cycle of the universal periodic review. ²⁰ |
| Ensure equal access to justice. | Weak Unchanged | There remains no standing invitation for UN Special Rapporteurs to visit the country. ²¹ The justice sector of Laos is plagued with corruption and political interference. While the constitution and legislation may provide for effective access to justice, in practice the judiciary is partisan and serious cases of torture and disappearances are not investigated by the authorities. ²² UN Special Rapporteur on the |

¹⁴ Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom in the World 2021: Laos*, 'F. Rule of Law'; U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Members of National/Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups', 'Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity', <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/laos/#:~:text=Significant%20human%20rights%20issues%20included,workers%3B%20restrictions%20on%20political%20participation%3B>.

¹⁵ United Nations, Human Rights Council, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Lao People's Democratic Republic, 11 November 2019, A/HRC/WG.6/35/LAO/1, p. 17.

¹⁶ UPR-Info Database, n.d. *Laos Recommendations*, [https://upr-info-database.uwazi.io/library/?q=\(allAggregations:lf.filters:\(cycle:\(values:!\(%27567eec7b-d5ab-4c36-a712-57c38fae9124%27\)\)\),response:\(values:!\(%2734b4d35c-8157-40cf-a42f-c3cd7353d692%27\)\)\),state_under_review:\(values:!\(pzcsbus1de\)\)\),from:0,includeUnpublished:!f,limit:30,order:desc,searchTerm:%27laos%20recommendations%27,sort:creationDate,unpublished:!f\)](https://upr-info-database.uwazi.io/library/?q=(allAggregations:lf.filters:(cycle:(values:!(%27567eec7b-d5ab-4c36-a712-57c38fae9124%27))),response:(values:!(%2734b4d35c-8157-40cf-a42f-c3cd7353d692%27))),state_under_review:(values:!(pzcsbus1de))),from:0,includeUnpublished:!f,limit:30,order:desc,searchTerm:%27laos%20recommendations%27,sort:creationDate,unpublished:!f)).

¹⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), n.d. *Late and non-reporting States*, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/LateReporting.aspx.

¹⁸ United Nations, Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on his visit to the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, 22 October 2019, A/HRC/41/39/ADD.2/CORR.1.

¹⁹ United Nations, Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material on her mission to Lao People's Democratic Republic including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material*, 21 January 2019, A/HRC/40/51/Add.1.

²⁰ The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 2023. *Lao PDR: 12th Human Rights Dialogue takes place in Vientiane*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/laos-pdr-12th-human-rights-dialogue-takes-place-vientiane_en.

²¹ OHCHR, n.d. *View Country visits of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council since 1998*, <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&country=LAO&Lang=en>.

²² Freedom House, 2023. *Freedom in the World 2023: Laos*, 'F. Rule of Law'; U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person'.

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| | | situation of human rights defenders has raised significant concerns in relation to this issue. ²³ |
| Criminalise incitement to commit genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. | Weak Unchanged | There is no update on Laos' effectiveness in criminalising atrocity crimes. While it has expressed some support for considering signing the <i>Rome Statute</i> , it has so far failed to do so. ²⁴ |
| Take measures to counter and prevent violent extremism. | Weak Unchanged | Laos' ability to counter violent extremism and terrorism is minimal. The country signed the <i>ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism</i> in 2007, ²⁵ but has yet to adopt a specific law on counterterrorism. ²⁶ |
| | | Laos is particularly vulnerable to money laundering. It is impacted by high levels of proceeds-generating crimes including drug production and trafficking, as well as various forms of fraud, environmental crime, human trafficking, theft, and other offences. ²⁷ Laos' porous borders and corruption in the country exacerbate the risk of money laundering. ²⁸ |
| | | Whilst Laos has indicated that there has been no evidence of threats from transnational or domestic terrorist groups in Laos, the 2023 report from the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering suggests this may be an inaccurate assessment. ²⁹ |
| | | Laos does not actively seek formal or informal collaboration to address cross-border risks. ³⁰ |
| | | Laos does get some assistance from other countries to improve its security function more generally in this area, particularly from Japan ³¹ and Australia, ³² but overall, it would seem Laos does not consider violent extremism to be a policy priority. |
| Enact and implement laws protecting vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to sexual and gender-based violence. | Fair Unchanged | There is increasing recognition in Laos of the necessity to prevent occurrences of sexual and gender-based-violence (SGBV). In 2023, the government has worked with key stakeholders on preventing and solving violence against women, in particular by implementing the Standard Operating Procedure to coordinate management and referral or |

²³ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023. *Lao PDR: UN expert calls out alarming pattern of violations against human rights defenders*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/lao-pdr-un-expert-calls-out-alarming-pattern-violations-against-human-rights>.

²⁴ Coalition for the International Criminal Court, n.d. *Laos People's Democratic Republic*, <https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/country/laos-peoples-democratic-republic>.

²⁵ ASEAN, 2007. *ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism*, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACCT.pdf>.

²⁶ United Nations, Human Rights Committee (CCPR), List of issues in relation to the initial report of Lao People's Democratic Republic Addendum: Replies of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the list of issues, 8 June 2018, CCPR/C/LAO/Q/1/Add.1, para. 22.

²⁷ The Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, 2023. *Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Lao PDR, Third Round Mutual Evaluation Report*, <https://apgml.org/members-and-observers/members/member-documents.aspx?m=a6c4a803-0e15-4a43-b03a-700b2a211d2e>.

²⁸ Trafficking of drugs, people, and gemstones in Laos is facilitated by porous borders, corruption in the public service and a general lack of capability and resources.

²⁹ The Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, 2023. *Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Lao PDR, Third Round Mutual Evaluation Report*.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The Star, 2021. 'Laos receives patrol cars from Japan to counter terrorism'. *The Star*, 21 January. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/01/21/laos-receives-patrol-cars-from-japan-to-counter-terrorism>;

Interpol, 2018. 'Japan funds project to boost transnational crime fighting in Laos', *Interpol*, 9 November. Available at: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2018/Japan-funds-project-to-boost-transnational-crime-fighting-in-Laos>.

³² Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d. *Laos country brief*, 'Defence and Security', <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/laos/laos-country-brief>.

women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence.³³

The government also recently integrated its two national action plans (Second National Plan of Action on Preventing and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence against Children (2021-2025) and the Fourth National Plan of Action on Gender Equality (2021-2025) into its ministries and provincial governments.³⁴ There is increasing visibility on the problem of SGBV and steps towards stopping it,³⁵ including amongst those of the LGBTIQ+ community. Yet, societal stigma and discrimination remains against this community,³⁶ and data on their experiences is hard to come by.³⁷

Despite these encouraging signs, SGBV in Laos remains widespread and still holds wide social stigma, therefore compiled data on reported violent instances is likely far smaller than the number of actual instances.³⁸

Those of Hmong ethnicity, particularly women, face continued intersectional discrimination and abuse due to ingrained prejudice against their distinct cultural and language differences.³⁹

On a more positive note, Laos held a national forum in 2023 to discuss the progress made in promoting children's rights in the country.⁴⁰ This is a welcome move after the recommendations from the third cycle of the UPR.

Protect individuals and groups fleeing atrocity crimes and their risk, in accordance with International Refugee Law.

Very Weak
Unchanged

According to the U.S State Department, Laotian law provides for the granting of asylum and refugee status, but there was no established system for protecting refugees.⁴¹ Laos is not a signatory to the 1951 convention, and received very few claims for international protection per year.⁴² The UNHCR assisted the government in processing asylum requests when they arose.

³³ AseanPlus News, 2023. 'Laos PM wants govt to take all steps in ending violence against women'. *The Star*, 28 November. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2023/11/28/laos-pm-wants-govt-to-take-all-steps-in-ending-violence-against-women>.

³⁴ UNFPA, 2021. 'Lao PDR integrates national policies for gender equality and ending violence against women and children into provincial, ministerial and sectoral plans'. *UNFPA Lao People's Democratic Republic*, 10 November. Available at: <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/news/lao-pdr-integrates-national-policies-gender-equality-and-ending-violence-against-women-and>.

³⁵ Khan, Miriam, 2021. 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is Possible... I am hopeful!', *The Laotian Times*, 26 November. Available at: <https://laotiantimes.com/2021/11/26/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-is-possible-i-am-hopeful/>.

³⁶ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses'.

³⁷ The World Bank, 2020. *Lao PDR: Gender-Based Violence Institutional Mapping Report*, p. 13, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300891594091530233/pdf/Lao-PDR-Gender-Based-Violence-Institutional-Mapping-Report.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3yLCpqLfsLreVmDoGeVJHLkAbwtsrLU0ufbAyOgBE8-3sDE8TIJCMv7bw>.

³⁸ In 2014 the first study of violence against women in Laos was conducted, finding that such violence was culturally tolerated within the country. A summary can be found here: National Commission for the Advancement of Women, 2015. *Summary Report: A Study on Violence against Women in Lao PDR*, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Lao%20PDR%20VAW%20Summary_Eng%20Report.pdf.

³⁹ UNPO, 2018. *Persecution & Marginalization of Hmong Women in Laos*, <https://unpo.org/article/21143>; UNPO, 2021. *ChaoFa Hmong: UNPO Calls on International Community to Act Against Tighter Security Measures*, <https://unpo.org/article/22178>.

⁴⁰ The Star, 2023. 'Laos to review progress in promoting children's rights'. *The Star*, 22 November. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2023/11/22/laos-to-review-progress-in-promoting-children039s-rights>.

⁴¹ U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including: f. Protection of Refugees'.

⁴² UNHCR, 2023. *Lao People's Democratic Republic*, <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/lao-peoples-democratic-republic>.

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| | | | <p>The government has also historically failed to respect the principle of non-refoulement when in 2013 they deported nine people from the DPRK back to China and then back into the DPRK.⁴³</p> <p>No further details were found, and there remains a dearth of information regarding refugees and their experiences within Laos.</p> |
| Domestic Implementation | Conduct a national assessment of risk and resilience. | Very Weak Unchanged | No assessment of risk and resilience has been taken within Laos. |
| | Cultivate and protect an active, diverse and robust civil society. | Very Weak Unchanged | Despite constitutional guarantees, civil society within Laos is effectively non-existent due to the prevalence of the ruling LPRP in almost every aspect of society. There are strong restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association, expression, and belief, ⁴⁴ and Laos is ranked 160 out of 177 in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index. ⁴⁵ Human rights groups have raised concern after a prominent Lao political activist was shot in May 2023. ⁴⁶ |
| | Ensure a legitimate, effective and civilian controlled security sector. | Weak Unchanged | Given the Laotian government's dismissive response to the recommendations at the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, human rights and the civil society space within Laos will continue to be restricted. ⁴⁷ |
| | Ensure the education system reflects the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of society, and sets examples of inclusiveness. | Weak Unchanged | While the Laotian government retains effective control over its security and military forces, they are credited with committing human rights abuses and due to pervasive corruption, can act with wide impunity. ⁴⁸ There are ongoing concerns for dissidents and civil society leaders in the country who have disappeared after contact with the security forces. ⁴⁹ |

⁴³ UNHCR, 2014. *Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees For the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report – Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*, p. 1 – 2, <https://www.refworld.org/country/COI.UNHCR.COUNTRYREP.LAO.,54c0d9414.0.html>.

⁴⁴ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties' and 'Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process'; Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom in the World 2021: Laos*; Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2019. 'Laos: Democracy Activists Arrested'. *HRW*, 16 November. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/16/laos-democracy-activists-arrested>.

⁴⁵ Reporters Without Borders, 2023. *MAP - 2023 World Press Freedom Index*. <https://rsf.org/en/map-2023-world-press-freedom-index>.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2023. 'Laos: Activist Gunned Down in Vientiane'. *Human Rights Watch*, 3 May. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/03/laos-activist-gunned-down-vientiane>.

⁴⁷ FIDH, 2020. *Government responses to Un human rights review a step in the wrong direction*, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/laos/government-response-to-un-human-rights-review-a-step-in-the-wrong>.

⁴⁸ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person'.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Freedom House, 2023. *Freedom in the World 2023: Laos*

⁵¹ Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom in the World 2021: Laos*; U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person'.

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| | | | <p>close to 99%.⁵² However, Laos still has some of the poorest education indicators in Southeast Asia.⁵³</p> <p>However, the quality of education provided is low, and Lao remains the sole teaching language, a circumstance which fails to consider the multiple languages possessed by the country's ethnic minorities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the shortcomings of Laos' education system, despite government initiatives to protect children from the virus and ensure their learning continued.⁵⁴</p> |
| | Prevent nationals committing atrocity crimes overseas. | Weak Unchanged | There is no update on Laos' ability (or inability) to prosecute nationals for committing atrocities overseas. |
| Bilateral and Multilateral Relations | Participate in international, regional, and national discussions on the further advancement of R2P. | Very Weak Unchanged | No evidence could be found of Laos participating in discussions regarding R2P. |
| | Leverage existing mechanisms and institutions (including regional and sub-regional organisations) to encourage States to fulfil their responsibility to protect. | Very Weak Unchanged | <p>Laos has abstained during voting on resolutions in the General Assembly that reference R2P.</p> <p>UN General Assembly Resolutions:⁵⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021: Terrorism and human rights A/RES/76/169: adopted without vote. • 2021: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/76/177: adopted without vote. • 2021: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/76/228: abstain. • 2022: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions A/RES/77/218: abstain. • 2022: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/77/226: adopted without vote. • 2022: Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar A/RES/77/227: adopted without vote. • 2022: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/77/230: abstain. |
| | Encourage and assist States to fulfil their R2P in situations of emerging and ongoing crisis, such as good offices and preventive diplomacy. | Very Weak Unchanged | <p>Laos remains ambivalent to the Rohingya genocide in neighbouring Myanmar, along with the military coup and ensuing violence that has engulfed the country since 1 February 2021.</p> <p>In March 2021, the country released an official statement, reiterating the official ASEAN statement for "...all parties concerned to engage in a peaceful resolution through constructive dialogue and</p> |

⁵² UNICEF, n.d. *Laos People's Democratic Republic: Education*, <https://www.unicef.org/laos/education>; Scholaro Pro, n.d. *Education System in Laos*, <https://www.scholaro.com/pro/Countries/Laos/Education-System>; U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons: Children'.

⁵³ UNICEF, n.d. *Laos People's Democratic Republic: Education*, <https://www.unicef.org/laos/education>.

⁵⁴ For more information, see: UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021. *Laos PDR Case Study: Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379513>.

⁵⁵ GCR2P, 2021. *UN General Assembly Resolutions Referencing R2P*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/un-general-assembly-resolutions-referencing-r2p-2/>. (Voting records for each resolution were accessed using the UN's Digital Library: General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d. *Voting Records*, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/voting.asp>.)

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| | | | reconciliation in order to return the situation to normalcy...”. ⁵⁶ |
| | | | In the middle of 2023, Laos took part in Thailand’s informal dialogue with Myanmar to resuscitate the peace process. Thailand’s ‘shadow diplomacy’ came under fire from many ASEAN members who argued the dialogue legitimised the junta. ⁵⁷ Sources claim that Laos was the only other ASEAN member to join the dialogue. ⁵⁸ There are concerns about how Laos will deal with the crisis as ASEAN chair in 2024. |
| | Strengthen regional and international networks for atrocity crime prevention. | Very Weak Unchanged | No updated information in the last few years could be found for Laos strengthening networks for atrocity crime prevention. |
| | Strengthen the role and capacity of regional organisations. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos is taking over as chair of ASEAN in 2024. This will be an opportunity for Laos to “promote community building and enhance cooperation on ASEAN connectivity and resilience”, according to a press release by Laos’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ⁵⁹ However, questions remain over what approach Laos will take to human rights abuses, for example, in Myanmar, |
| | Support the development and work of regional human rights and other preventive capacities. | Very Weak Unchanged | There is no evidence that Laos supports regional initiatives in the fields of human rights or atrocity prevention. |
| | Support atrocity prevention through development and assistance partnerships. | Weak Unchanged | Laos has held a regular human rights dialogue with Australia since 2006, ⁶⁰ and Australia has provided support to Laos in this area through the Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program. ⁶¹ The new four-year phase of the program will run until mid-2027, with \$1.6m of funding from Australia. ⁶² |
| | | | Laos had their 12 th Human Rights Dialogue with the European Union on 12 June 2023 in Vientiane Capital. ⁶³ The Laos PDR and EU noted substantial progress made on the Plan of Action on recommendations from the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. ⁶⁴ |
| United Nations, prevention, Peacekeeping, and assistance | Support the early warning and capacity building efforts of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P. | Weak Unchanged | No current information could be found on Laos supporting the Office. Given its previous voting record in the UN, its support is most likely ambivalent at best. |
| | Support the strengthening of the UN’s capacity for atrocity prevention, including through the UN Human Rights system. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos does not appear supportive of much of the UN’s work in human rights. |

⁵⁶ Phonevilay, Latsamy, 2021. ‘Laos Makes Official Statement on Myanmar’. *The Laotian Times*, 15 March. Available at: <https://laotiantimes.com/2021/03/15/laos-makes-official-statement-on-myanmar/>.

⁵⁷ Hutt, David, 2023. ‘ASEAN Gives Laos a Reprieve Over Myanmar Crisis’. *The Diplomat*, 15 September. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/asean-gives-laos-a-reprieve-over-myanmar-crisis/>.

⁵⁸ Petty, Martin, 2023. ‘Explainer: Why are Thailand’s talks with Myanmar causing a regional stir?’ *Reuters*, 19 June. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/why-are-thailands-talks-with-myanmar-causing-regional-stir-2023-06-19/>.

⁵⁹ The Star, 2023. ‘Asean chairmanship brings great opportunities to Laos, says Lao deputy PM’. *The Star*, 21 November. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2023/11/21/asean-chairmanship-brings-great-opportunities-to-laos-says-lao-deputy-pm>.

⁶⁰ Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022. 7th *Australia-Lao PDR Human Rights Dialogue*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/media-release/7th-australia-lao-pdr-human-rights-dialogue>.

⁶¹ Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d. *Laos country brief*, ‘Human rights’.

⁶² Australian Human Rights Commission, 2023. *Working with Lao Government to protect human rights*, <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/working-lao-government-protect-human-rights>.

⁶³ The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 2023. *Lao PDR: 12th Human Rights Dialogue takes place in Vientiane*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/lao-pdr-12th-human-rights-dialogue-takes-place-vientiane_en.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

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| Support preventive actions on atrocity crimes. | Very Weak Unchanged | No evidence was found of Laos supporting any such actions. |
| Contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations (especially those with a protection of civilians mandate). | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos has yet to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. |
| Develop the capacities needed to support civilian protection, including through the training of military and civilian personnel for peacekeeping. | Very Weak Unchanged | Due to their non-participation in peacekeeping operations, there is no evidence that Laos has trained any of their citizens for peacekeeping duties. |
| Support the Kigali Principles. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos has not signed the Kigali Principles. |
| Support UN Security Council veto restraint on issues relating to atrocity prevention. | Very Weak Unchanged | Laos has yet to sign either the Code of Conduct regarding UN Security Council action against atrocities, ⁶⁵ or the French/Mexican initiative on the suspension of veto. ⁶⁶ |

⁶⁵ GCR2P, 2019. *List of Signatories to the ACT Code of Conduct*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/list-of-signatories-to-the-act-code-of-conduct/>.

⁶⁶ GCR2P, 2020. *List of Supporters of the Political Declaration on the Suspension of Veto*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/list-of-supporters-of-the-political-declaration-on-suspension-of-veto/>.