



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

# UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF R2P IMPLEMENTATION 2022



Asia-Pacific Centre for the  
Responsibility to Protect



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The following Updated Assessment Annex provides an overview of Lao People's Democratic Republic's efforts in implementing R2P as of 2022. For a full description of the methodology used in this study, see Part II of 'Implementing the Responsibility to Protect in the Asia Pacific: An Assessment of Progress and Challenges', available [here](#). For more information on R2P implementation in the Asia Pacific in 2022, see the updated assessment [here](#).

# 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. 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.

# LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Assessment	Indicator
<b>Strong</b>	Protection of populations from atrocity crimes
	Reduction of atrocity crime risks
	Participate in international peer review processes, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council
<b>Fair</b>	Sign, ratify and implement relevant instruments of international law
	Enact and implement laws protecting vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to sexual and gender-based violence
<b>Weak</b>	Ensure domestic promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on the elimination of discrimination
	Cooperate fully with UN Human Rights mandate holders and those of relevant regional organisations
	Ensure equal access to justice
	Criminalise incitement to commit genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity
	Take measures to counter and prevent violent extremism
	Ensure a legitimate, effective and civilian controlled security sector
	Ensure the education system reflects the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of society, and sets examples of inclusiveness
	Prevent nationals committing atrocity crimes overseas
	Support atrocity prevention through development and assistance partnerships
	Support the early warning and capacity building efforts of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P
<b>Very Weak</b>	Dealing with past atrocities
	Appoint national R2P Focal Point
	Incorporate atrocity crime risks and dynamics into conflict analysis and/or development partnerships
	Establish domestic mechanisms to hold the government accountable for upholding its responsibility to protect
	Sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and cooperate fully with the Court
	Establish and maintain National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles
	Protect individuals and groups fleeing atrocity crimes and their risk, in accordance with International Refugee Law
	Conduct a national assessment of risk and resilience
	Cultivate and protect an active, diverse and robust civil society
	Participate in international, regional and national discussions on the further advancement of R2P
	Leverage existing mechanisms and institutions (including regional and sub-regional organisations) to encourage States to fulfil their responsibility to protect
	Encourage and assist States to fulfil their R2P in situations of emerging and ongoing crisis, such as good offices and preventive diplomacy

	Strengthen regional and international networks for atrocity crime prevention
	Strengthen the role and capacity of regional organisations
	Support the development and work of regional human rights and other preventive capacities
	Support the strengthening of the UN's capacity for atrocity prevention, including through the UN Human Rights system
	Support preventive actions on atrocity crimes
	Contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations (especially those with a protection of civilians mandate)
	Develop the capacities needed to support civilian protection, including through the training of military and civilian personnel for peacekeeping
	Support the Kigali Principles
	Support UN Security Council veto restraint on issues relating to atrocity prevention

Lao People's Democratic Republic 2022 Score: 16

Lao People's Democratic Republic 2019 Score: 15.5 (16)

Difference: +/- 0 

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) remains one of the region's more circumspect states with regards to R2P, with little change in its engagement with the norm. Whilst not explicitly opposing the norm, it continues to neither engage nor support initiatives designed to mitigate risks of atrocity crimes. Whilst Laos has improved its recognition of the problem of sexual and gender-based violence, significant challenges remain with respect to human rights, civil and political freedoms, and resolving lingering issues with the Hmong ethnicity.

Thematic Area	Indicator	Assessment	Notes
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. This control does offer its population protection from atrocity crimes, although discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities, particularly the Hmong, is an ongoing concern. <sup>1</sup>
	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. <sup>2</sup>
	Dealing with past atrocities.	Very Weak Decrease	Ongoing violence against those of the Hmong ethnicity continues within Laos. This is a continuation of the Secret War, <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup>
	Incorporate atrocity crime risks and dynamics into conflict analysis and/or development partnerships.	Very Weak Unchanged	Laos has not integrated atrocity crime risks into conflict analysis or development partnerships.
	Establish domestic mechanisms to hold the government	Very Weak Unchanged	There remains no evidence of Laos having established such domestic mechanisms.

<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/6317/Risk_Assessment_laos_vol15_march2021.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> O'Connor, Juliette, 2020. 'Bombies': Legacies of the Secret War in Laos, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseih/2020/02/11/bombies-legacy-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>.

<sup>5</sup> 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/>.

	accountable for upholding its responsibility to protect.		
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> . <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup>
	Establish and maintain National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles.	Very Weak Unchanged	Despite this impetus, the country has yet to do so. There remains no national human rights institution in Laos. In 2018 at the UN, the Human Rights Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights noted in its concluding observations the country did not possess such an institution and recommended the formation of one.
	Ensure domestic promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on the elimination of discrimination.	Weak Unchanged	It did note certain government bodies within the country possessed human rights mandates, but that none of them were independent and in line with the Paris Principles. <sup>8</sup>  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. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup>  There was no law prohibiting discrimination along sexual or gender identities, and discrimination is regarded as common, although underreporting is most likely present due to pervasive social stigma around violence. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 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](https://asp.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/asp/states%20parties/pages/the%20states%20parties%20to%20the%20rome%20statute.aspx#L).

<sup>7</sup> 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>.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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/>.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom in the World 2021: Laos*, 'D. Freedom of Expression and Belief,' 'F. Rule of Law', <https://freedomhouse.org/country/laos/freedom-world/2021>; 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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->

	Participate in international peer review processes, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council.	Strong Unchanged	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. <sup>12</sup>  Laos accepted a total of 160 recommendations at its third review, noting a further 83 and rejecting none. <sup>13</sup>  Laos still retains three reports overdue for international treaty procedures. <sup>14</sup>
	Cooperate fully with UN Human Rights mandate holders and those of relevant regional organisations.	Weak Unchanged	A fourth report by UN mandate holders regarding Laos has been completed (regarding extreme poverty) in 2019. Other requests of the country by the UN are either inactive or impending.  There remains no standing invitation for UN Special Rapporteurs to visit the country. <sup>15</sup>
	Ensure equal access to justice.	Weak Decrease	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. <sup>16</sup>
	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. <sup>17</sup>
	Take measures to counter and prevent violent extremism.	Weak Unchanged	Laos' ability to counter violent extremism and terrorism remains lacklustre. The country signed the <i>ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism</i> in 2007, <sup>18</sup> but has yet to adopt a specific law on counterterrorism. <sup>19</sup> Laos has also not undertaken a risk assessment into its vulnerabilities in money laundering and terrorist financing, <sup>20</sup> a glaring

[practices/laos/#:~:text=Significant%20human%20rights%20issues%20included,workers%3B%20restrictions%20on%20political%20participation%3B.](#)

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> UPR-Info Database, n.d. *Laos Recommendations*, [https://upr-info-database.uwazi.io/library/?q=\(allAggregations:!f,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:!f,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).)

<sup>14</sup> 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](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/LateReporting.aspx).

<sup>15</sup> 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>.

<sup>16</sup> 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*, 'Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:'; fidh, 2021. *Laos: Nine years on, civil society worldwide still demands answers on Sombath's enforced disappearance*, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/laos/laos-nine-years-on-civil-society-worldwide-still-demands-answers-on>.

<sup>17</sup> Coalition for the International Criminal Court, n.d. *Laos People's Democratic Republic*, <https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/country/laos-peoples-democratic-republic>.

<sup>18</sup> ASEAN, 2007. *ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism*, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ACCT.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, 2011. *Mutual Evaluation Report: Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism: Lao PDR July 2011*, <http://www.apgml.org/members-and-observers/members/member->



			<p>vulnerability given the country's widespread corruption and the presence of smuggling networks.<sup>21</sup></p> <p>Laos does get some assistance from other countries to improve its security function in this area, particularly from Japan<sup>22</sup> and Australia,<sup>23</sup> but overall, it would seem Laos does not consider violent extremism to be a policy priority.</p>
	<p>Enact and implement laws protecting vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to sexual and gender-based violence.</p>	<p>Fair <b>Increase</b></p>	<p>There is increasing recognition in Laos to prevent occurrences of sexual and gender-based-violence (SGBV). The government 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.<sup>24</sup> There is increasing visibility on the problem of SGBV and steps towards stopping it,<sup>25</sup> including amongst those of the LGBTIQ+ community. Yet, societal stigma and discrimination remains against this community,<sup>26</sup> and data on their experiences is hard to come by.<sup>27</sup></p> <p>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.<sup>28</sup></p> <p>Those of Hmong ethnicity, particularly women, face continued intersectional discrimination and abuse due to ingrained prejudice against their distinct cultural and language differences.<sup>29</sup></p>
	<p>Protect individuals and groups fleeing atrocity crimes and their risk, in accordance with International Refugee Law.</p>	<p>Very Weak <b>Unchanged</b></p>	<p>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</p>

[documents.aspx?m=a6c4a803-0e15-4a43-b03a-700b2a211d2e](#), p. 23 – 30. (The report can be downloaded from the link on this page.)

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> 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>.

<sup>23</sup> 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>.

<sup>24</sup> 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>.

<sup>25</sup> 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/>.

<sup>26</sup> U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses and Trafficking in Persons'.

<sup>27</sup> 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>.

<sup>28</sup> 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](https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Lao%20PDR%20VAW%20Summary_Eng%20Report.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> 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>.

			<p>protecting refugees.<sup>30</sup> In 2014, UNHCR noted the Laotian government reported no asylum seekers, refugees, or stateless persons in the country. UNHCR assisted in the government in processing asylum requests when they arose. They also noted the government 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.<sup>31</sup></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, <sup>32</sup> and Laos is ranked 172 out of 179 in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index. <sup>33</sup>
	Ensure a legitimate, effective and civilian controlled security sector.	Weak Decrease	Given the Laotian government's response to the recommendations at its latest UPR, human rights and the civil society space within Laos will continue to be restricted. <sup>34</sup>
	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. There are ongoing concerns for dissidents and civil society leaders in the country who have disappeared after contact with the security forces.
			Arbitrary arrest is a problem, and there seems to be no systems in place to ensure complaints regarding security sector abuses are heard or followed up. <sup>35</sup>
			The education system in Laos is free and compulsory for the first five years of primary education, and the country has a net enrolment of close to 99%. <sup>36</sup> 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

<sup>30</sup> 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'.

<sup>31</sup> 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>.

<sup>32</sup> U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 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>.

<sup>33</sup> Reporters Without Borders, 2021. *Laos*, <https://rsf.org/en/laos>.

<sup>34</sup> 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>.

<sup>35</sup> Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom in the World 2021: Laos*; U.S Department of State, 2020. *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Laos*, 'Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:'.

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, n.d. *Lao 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'.

			system, despite government initiatives to protect children from the virus and ensure their learning continued. <sup>37</sup>
	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	Laos has abstained during voting on resolutions in the General Assembly that reference R2P.  <b>UN General Assembly Resolutions:</b> <sup>38</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions A/RES/73/172: <b>abstained</b>.</li> <li>• 2018: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/73/180: <b>adopted without vote</b>.</li> <li>• 2018: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/73/182: <b>abstained</b>.</li> <li>• 2019: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/74/166: <b>adopted without vote</b>.</li> <li>• 2019: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/74/169: <b>abstained</b>.</li> <li>• 2020: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/75/190: <b>adopted without vote</b>.</li> <li>• 2020: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions A/RES/75/189: <b>abstained</b>.</li> <li>• 2020: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/75/193: <b>abstained</b>.</li> <li>• 2021: Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites A/RES/75/258: <b>adopted without vote</b>.</li> <li>• 2021: The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity A/RES/75/277: <b>abstained</b>.</li> </ul>
	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	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.  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 reconciliation in order to return the situation to normalcy...". <sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For more information, see: UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021. *Lao 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>.

<sup>38</sup> 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>.)

<sup>39</sup> 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/>.

			Other than this statement, no other evidence could be found of Laos encouraging other States to fulfill its R2P.
	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	No evidence was found for Laos having done this.
	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 Increase	Laos has held a regular human rights dialogue with Australia since 2006, <sup>40</sup> and Australia has provided support to Laos in this area through the Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program. <sup>41</sup>
			No other information could be found.
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.
	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, <sup>42</sup> or the French/Mexican initiative on the suspension of veto. <sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022. *7<sup>th</sup> Australia-Lao PDR Human Rights Dialogue*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/media-release/7th-australia-lao-pdr-human-rights-dialogue>.

<sup>41</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d. *Laos country brief*, 'Human rights'.

<sup>42</sup> 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/>.

<sup>43</sup> 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/>.