



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Human Rights in Cambodia and Laos: Challenges and Opportunities

**Wednesday, December 16, 2015
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
2261 Rayburn House Office Building**

Panelists



T. Kumar, is the International Advocacy Director for Amnesty International. He has served as a human rights monitor around the world and served as a director of refugee ships and refugee camps. Kumar has monitored several elections with former President Carter and with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He also served as a Judge of Elections in Philadelphia and served as a Professor at the Washington College of Law. Kumar also worked at the Quaker United

Nations Office and served as the United Nations Representative for Peace Brigades International. Kumar regularly lectures at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute and testifies before Congress. Kumar was a political prisoner for over five years in his native Sri Lanka. Amnesty International adopted him as a Prisoner of Conscience in a worldwide campaign to secure his release. He started his legal studies in prison and eventually became an Attorney-at-Law and devoted his entire practice to defend political prisoners and advance human rights.



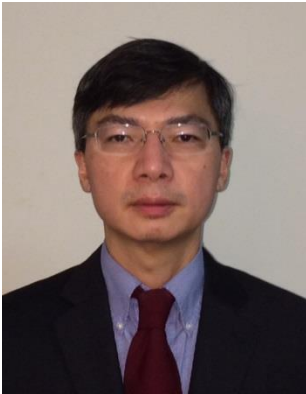
Bounchanh Senthavong presently serves as president of the Union for Lao Nation, established in 2009 and based in the Greater Washington DC area. She previously held the position of Secretary-General for a partnership between Union for Lao Nation and Laotian Human Rights Council. She co-founded the Lao American Women Association (LAWA) of the Washington D.C. Metro area, serving in several capacities including as President, and currently sits on its Advisory Board. She also served on the board of the

Laotian American National Alliance (LANA). Ms. Senthavong retired in 2013 after 20

years of service with the US federal government, including 7 years with the Voice of America-Lao Service, and 13 years in the Budget Office of the International Broadcasting Bureau, Broadcasting Board of Governors.



John Sifton, the Asia Advocacy Director, works on South and Southeast Asia. Previously, he was the director of One World Research, a public interest research and investigation firm. Before joining One World Research, Sifton spent six years at Human Rights Watch, first as a researcher in the Asia division, focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan, then as the senior researcher on terrorism and counterterrorism. In 2000 and 2001, Sifton worked for the International Rescue Committee, primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in 1999 he worked at a refugee advocacy organization in Albania and Kosovo. He holds a law degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree from St. John's College, Annapolis.



Dr. Bob Ung is the Chairman of the Khmer People Network for Cambodia, a network of 17 NGOs both in the US and Cambodia involved in bringing about the full implementation of the Paris Peace Accords. He came to the US as a refugee shortly after the fall of Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge. 87 members of his immediate family and relatives were killed during the Cambodian Genocide. He is part of a new generation of Cambodians living abroad who is working to bring about genuine democracy and the respect for human rights in Cambodia. Dr. Ung has been a practicing physician for the past 18 years, in part as a faculty member at Harvard Medical School in the Department of Anesthesia and Critical Care specializing in organ transplantation. He has taught at the University of Massachusetts Medical School for 11 years involved in educating the next generation of medical students, interns, residents, and nurses. He is now in private practice.

Moderator



Morton Sklar has spent his entire professional life working on human rights. He started in Alabama during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., working on voting rights cases. In 1978 he was one of the earliest advocates for applying international human rights standards to the United States, writing, and presenting to Congress, the first report on U.S. compliance under the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords. In 1995 he founded and headed a human rights litigation group, initially called the World Organization Against Torture USA, later Human Rights USA, that developed

and won a number of ground breaking human rights case, including the only successful court challenge to the U.S. government's "rendition to torture" policy (the Abu Ali case), the successful challenge to Yahoo!'s practice of providing Internet user ID information to the government of China that had placed hundreds of Chinese political dissidents in jail (the Shi Tao case), and the highest level U.S. court case dealing with the practice of female genital mutilation in Africa (the Philomena Nwaokolo case). He also served on the staff of the United Nations (ILO) Special Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Burma in 1997.