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Laos: Attack on the life of human rights defender and pro-democracy social media activist Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom

On 29 April 2023, human rights defender and pro-democracy social media activist **Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom** was shot in the Chanthabuly district of Vientiane, Laos. An unknown assailant shot Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom twice, in the cheek and chest, while he was at a local bar in Vientiane, but luckily survived the gun attack.

[Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom](#) is a social media activist and human rights defender who runs two Facebook pages *Driven by the Keyboard* and *Sor Tor Lor – the Republic* with over 41,000 and 6,800 followers respectively, where he advocates for social, environmental, economic, and political rights in Laos. His digital platforms facilitate discussions on pro-democratic movements, issues such as child rights and LGBTQI+ rights, and human rights violations in Laos.

Human rights defender Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom set up a closed Facebook group *Laos Drama* in April 2020 to start a discussion on democracy and human rights in the country. Later, in March 2022, he set up the public Facebook page, *Driven by the Keyboard*, to call for democracy in Laos. The page advocates for an end to the one-party rule in Laos and Laos’ dependency on China, and reports on human rights abuses on the ground. Due to the growing following of *Driven by the Keyboard*, the human rights defender has been facing increased surveillance.

On 29 April 2023, human rights defender Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom was in a local bar in Vientiane when he was shot twice, in the cheek and chest, by an unidentified assailant. On 1 May 2023, his family reported him dead to ensure his safety, anticipating another attack on the human rights defender’s life. On 3 May 2023, it was reported that Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom survived the attack and is receiving medical treatment. On 5 May 2023, the Vientiane National Police made a statement saying that the assailant has not been identified and the attack is suspected to have arisen from “a business or personal dispute.”

The attempted attack on the human rights defender’s life is the latest in a series of attacks and reprisals faced by human rights defenders criticising the one-party authoritarian government in Laos.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern on the pattern of attacks against human rights defenders who express dissent against the Lao government. The organisation is seriously concerned for the physical and psychological wellbeing of the human rights defender. Front Line Defenders believes that the attack against Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom is directly related to his peaceful work in defence of human rights in Laos.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Laos to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against human rights defender Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Anousa “Jack” Luangsouphom;

3. Endeavour to cease targeting of all human rights defenders in Laos and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and or attacks.