

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 23/006/2006

07 February 2006

Further Information on UA 06/06 (ASA 23/002/2006, 6 January 2006) and follow-ups (ASA 23/003/2006, 13 January 2006; ASA 23/004/2006, 18 January 2006) - Prisoners of conscience/human rights defenders at risk

KINGDOM OF
CAMBODIA

Kem Sokha (m), President, Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
Pa Nguon Teang (m), CCHR Acting Director/Radio Director
Rong Chhun (m), President, Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association
(CITA)
Mam Sonando (m), Director, Beehive Radio
Yeng Virak (m), Director, Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
Chea Mony (m), President, Free Trade Union of Workers
Ea Channa (m), Deputy Secretary-General, Students' Movement for
Democracy
Men Nath (m), President, Cambodian Independent Civil Servants' Association
Prince Sisowath Thomico (m), Secretary to former King Sihanouk
Say Bory (m), Advisor to former King Sihanouk

On 3 February, government lawyers officially withdrew criminal complaints against human rights activists Kem Sokha and Pa Nguon Teang, trade unionist Rong Chhun and radio station manager Mam Sonando. Prime Minister Hun Sen requested that lawyers drop criminal defamation suits against the four men after they wrote letters thanking the Prime Minister for securing their release from prison on 17 January.

The Prime Minister had requested Phnom Penh Municipal Court to release the four on bail amid strong international criticism of the government's continuing crackdown on freedom of expression. They and Yeng Virak, who was released on bail on 11 January, had been jailed in connection with criticism of the government's policy regarding the border with Viet Nam.

Criminal complaints against Yeng Virak, Prince Sisowath Thomico and Chea Mony were also reportedly withdrawn. Chea Mony returned to Cambodia on 1 February. Ea Channa, Men Nath and Say Bory are still outside Cambodia. Criminal complaints against them have not been withdrawn, and criminal charges filed by the courts in response to the complaints remain pending.

The group of human rights activists and civil society leaders had been detained and/or charged with criminal defamation and other offences in connection with criticism of the government's policy over a controversial border agreement with Viet Nam, in a serious attack on freedom of expression.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation and will take further action as necessary. No further action from the UA network is required at this time.