

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

9 July 1997

CAMBODIA Chao Sambath
Nhek Bun Chhay
Por Bun Sreu MP

Serey Kosal

Amnesty International fears for the safety of Chao Sambath believed to have been arrested on 9 July 1997. It is not known where he is detained or what charges are likely to be levelled against him. Chao Sambath served as Director of the Intelligence and Espionage Department at the Ministry of National Defence. He was also a close advisor to First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh ousted in a coup over the weekend 5-6 July by his rival Second Prime Minister Hun Sen. Hor Sok, a member of Prince Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party and Secretary of State at the Ministry of Interior, was arrested and killed on 7 July strengthening fears for the safety of other detained FUNCINPEC politicians.

Amnesty International also fears for the safety of General Nhek Bun Chhay who was Deputy Chief of Staff of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and who is loyal to Prince Ranariddh. His house in Phnom Penh was the focus for sustained attacks over the weekend and he is believed to have fled the capital. Latest reports suggest that he is surrounded by forces loyal to Hun Sen, at Odong, 30 miles north of Phnom Penh. Some reports say that FUNCINPEC MP, Por Bun Sreu, also loyal to Prince Ranariddh, is with Nhek Bun Chhay. Amnesty International believes that their capture may be imminent.

The organization also believes that Serey Kosal, former First Vice-Governor of Battambang Province and lately Special Advisor to Prince Ranariddh, is at risk. In television and radio broadcasts, Hun Sen has repeatedly stated that the only people who should be arrested are Prince Ranariddh (now in France), Hor Sok (who has been arrested and killed), Chao Sambath, Nhek Bun Chhay and Serey Kosal. The organization fears for his safety should he be arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cambodia has had a coalition government since elections organized by the UN in 1993. The two main parties in the coalition were FUNCINPEC led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Hun Sen. In recent months the coalition has been increasingly fragile as relations between the two prime ministers became ever more hostile. Prince Ranariddh left the country on 4 July, ostensibly for a private visit to France, though it later transpired he had been warned of forthcoming violence. CPP forces loyal to Hun Sen launched violent attacks in the capital on Saturday and fighting continued throughout the weekend. By 7 July the capital was in the hands of the CPP troops. Sporadic fighting has also been reported in provincial areas in the last two days. Hundreds of FUNCINPEC soldiers and officials are believed to be in detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in English or French or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Chao Sambath and urging that he is not subjected to any ill-treatment in detention;
- expressing concern for the safety of General Nhek Bun Chhay, Por Bun Sreu MP and Serey Kosal;

- urging that if they are arrested, their treatment in detention should conform with minimum international standards;
- expressing great regret at the killing of Hor Sok while in custody and urging that those responsible be held accountable for their actions;
- urging that no one should be targeted on account of their peaceful political views.

APPEALS TO:

HE Hun Sen
Second Prime Minister
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Telegrams: HE Hun Sen, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Salutation: Your Excellency

HE Sar Kheng
Minister of Interior
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Telegrams: HE Sar Kheng, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Salutation: Your Excellency

HE Tea Banh
Minister of Defence
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Telegrams: HE Tea Banh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Salutation: Your Excellency

PLEASE NOTE: Telecommunications with Cambodia have been almost non-existent since the weekend. Therefore no fax numbers have been given.

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of CAMBODIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 August 1997.