

URGENT ACTION

CONDEMN FORCED EVICTION OF CAMBODIAN FAMILIES

Some 31 families living with HIV and AIDS in the Borei Keila area of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, have been forcibly evicted from their homes. Around 20 of the families were taken to a grossly inadequate resettlement site with limited access to health care. Another 11 families were given insufficient compensation to rent temporary housing elsewhere.

On 21 June, three days after the forced eviction of 20 families from Borei Keila, the remaining 11 were also evicted after government officials told them they were eligible to rent flats being built in the area. On 21 June, the authorities gave each family US\$90 with which to rent alternative accommodation for an unspecified time until the new flats are ready—far less than local rents. The authorities have given no written guarantees that the families are entitled to one of these.

The families forcibly evicted from Borei Keila on 18 June were taken to a resettlement site at Tuol Sambo, some 20km away. Conditions there are grossly inadequate and pose additional health risks to the families. Basic services are lacking at Tuol Sambo, with water supplied by only one well, no proper sewage and sanitation system, and no electricity. The families do not have the means to pay for transport to central Phnom Penh, in order to receive the anti-retroviral treatment they need, and to travel to their jobs as scavengers and porters in the city.

The housing at the Tuol Sambo resettlement site looks distinct from other homes in the area. The families, most of whom are living in severe poverty, fear they will face stigmatization and discrimination because of their HIV status. When Amnesty International visited the site in April 2009, local villagers already referred to it as the “AIDS village”.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, French, Khmer or your own language:

- Condemning the forced eviction of 20 of the 31 families living with HIV and AIDS at Borei Keila on 18 June to a grossly inadequate resettlement site;
- Expressing concern that 11 other families were evicted on 21 June without guaranteed adequate alternative housing and security of tenure at Borei Keila;
- Calling on the authorities to immediately provide humanitarian assistance to families and improve basic services at Tuol Sambo, such as clean water, an adequate sanitation and sewage system, and access to local health care;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that the families are not discriminated against because of their health status

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 AUGUST 2009 TO:

Kep Chuktema
Governor of Phnom Penh
Municipality
69 Blvd. Preah Monivong
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Fax: + 855 23 526101
Email:
phnompenh@phnompenh.gov.kh
Salutation: Dear Governor

Mom Bunheng
Minister of Health
No 151-153 Kampuchea Krom
Blvd.
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Fax: + 855 23 426841
Email: webmaster@moh.gov.kh
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Lok Chumteav Bun Rany Hun Sen
President, Cambodian Red Cross
#17 Street Cambodian Red Cross (street 180)
Phnom Penh
Cambodia
Email: info@redcross.org.kh
Salutation: Dear Lok Chumteav

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

This is the second update of UA 99/09 (ASA 23/006/2009, 9 April 2009).

Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/ai_search?keywords=UA+99%2F09&form_id=search_theme_form&form_token=629f853055239deee76fec341970b88c

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 31 families were living in a large urban poor community at Borei Keila. Under a 2003 land-share agreement a developer was to provide new housing for the original residents (over 1,700 people) on part of the land. In March 2007, the Municipality of Phnom Penh resettled 31 families living with HIV/AIDS against their will in temporary green corrugated metal shelters in appalling conditions, to make way for the construction of a number of residential houses. The families believe that because of their HIV status, the authorities discriminated against them by not assessing them property for eligibility for flats in the new buildings.

In 2008, Amnesty International received reports about 27 forced evictions in Cambodia, affecting an estimated 23,000 people, most of whom are living in poverty. Some 150,000 Cambodians are known to be living at risk of forced eviction in the wake of land disputes, land grabbing, agro-industrial and urban redevelopment projects. An estimated 70,000 of these live in Phnom Penh.

The UN's International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and human rights urge governments to ensure universal access to HIV-related goods, services and information, and that they "not only be available, acceptable and of good quality, but within physical reach and affordable for all". Cambodia also has an to ensure adequate provision of health care to all its citizens, including access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Forced evictions are evictions carried out without adequate notice and consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation. Under international law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Cambodia is prohibited from carrying out forced evictions, and must protect people from forced evictions.

Further Information on UA: 99/09 Index: ASA 23/013/2009 Issue Date: 30 June 2009

