

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Thailand/Cambodia: Good news - Sok Yoeun will be released

Amnesty International today welcomed news from the Thai Foreign Ministry that prisoner of conscience Sok Yoeun will be released and permitted to rejoin his family in Finland.

"We are delighted that Sok Yoeun will soon leave prison where he has spent over four years and urge all those concerned to ensure his speedy release and reunion with his wife and children," said Amnesty International today. "Four years in prison being used as a political pawn is a tragedy for him and his family and our elation is tempered by regret over the fact that he has been in prison at all", the organization added.

Sok Yoeun lost a final appeal in the Thai courts against extradition to Cambodia in November 2003, provoking an international outcry. The Cambodian authorities dropped the extradition request on 15 January leading to this welcome decision.

His release is a result of tireless campaigning by many people in many countries and is a victory for global human rights activism.

Background

The Cambodian authorities have accused Sok Yoeun, who is a member of a Cambodian opposition party, of being responsible for a 1998 rocket attack, which Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed was aimed at him. This allegation is widely believed to be unfounded. Two other opposition party activists were arrested in Cambodia in connection with the attack, and were held incommunicado in the Military Detention Facility in the capital, Phnom Penh for six months. They were released in March 2000, after the investigating judge failed to find any evidence against them. They have since fled Cambodia and were resettled in another country. Sok Yoeun himself fled Cambodia in September 1999.

Sok Yoeun was arrested on 24 December 1999 after a Thai politician complained that Thailand was harbouring a Cambodian "terrorist". Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, issued a public demand at the time for Sok Yoeun's return to Cambodia. He was initially sentenced to six months' imprisonment for entering the country illegally. Since this sentence expired on 26 June 2000, he has remained in detention fighting extradition to Cambodia.

Public Document

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