

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 23/002/2001

10 April 2001

**Further information on EXTRA 20/01 (ASA 23/01/2001, 23 March 2001) - Fear of forcible repatriation/possible prisoners of conscience**

**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA24 Vietnamese ethnic minority people (names unknown)**

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The 24 Vietnamese ethnic minority people, who were at risk of being forcibly returned to Viet Nam, have been granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They will reportedly be resettled in the United States of America.

The Cambodian authorities had initially denied the 24 asylum seekers, now known to include one woman, access to the UNHCR, and maintained that they would be returned to Viet Nam. However, on 2 April the United States offered them asylum, providing that they were recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. The UNHCR were allowed access to them in order to consider their status, despite the Vietnamese authorities' repeated calls for their return to Viet Nam. They were granted refugee status on 9 April.

The 24 had fled Viet Nam after a crackdown on ethnic unrest in the Central Highlands. It was feared that they would face persecution if forcibly returned. They had been arrested in Mondulkiri province on 17 and 21 March and were moved to Phnom Penh on 24 March, where they were detained in the Military Police Detention Centre.

Amnesty International believes that pressure from the international community played a large part in the Cambodian authorities' decision to permit the 24 to apply for refugee status with the UNHCR. Amnesty International welcomes Cambodia's decision to comply with the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

**Thank you to all those who reacted quickly to this Urgent Action. No further action is required.**