

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 23/004/2006

18 January 2006

Further Information on UA 06/06 (ASA 23/002/2006, 06 January 2006) and follow-up (ASA 23/003/2006, 13 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

The four remaining prisoners of conscience were released on bail on 17 January, on an order from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. The group walked out of Prey Sar Prison after a request to the court by Prime Minister Hun Sen. However, the government has not yet withdrawn the criminal complaints it has lodged against them and Yeng Virak, who was released on bail on 11 January, nor has the Phnom Penh Municipal Court dropped the criminal charges arising from these complaints. All five could therefore be arrested at any time.

Human rights activists Kem Sokha and Pa Nguon Teang, trade unionist Rong Chhun and radio station manager Mam Sonando were released amid strong international criticism of the government's continuing crackdown on freedom of expression.

They and Yeng Virak had been jailed in connection with criticism of the government's policy regarding the border with Viet Nam.

Kem Sokha, Pa Nguon Teang and Yeng Virak are facing charges of criminal defamation over a handwritten comment on a banner used at a rally on International Human Rights Day. Mam Sonando, manager of Beehive Radio (*Sambok Khmum*), is facing the same charge over criticisms of the government's border policies voiced by a Paris-based group called Cambodia's Border Committee, in an interview broadcast by the radio station. He has also been charged with disinformation and incitement to commit a crime, and could be sentenced to several years in prison.

Rong Chhun, President of the Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association, was arrested on 15 October over a written statement issued by the Cambodian Watchdog Council (CWC), a coalition of unions and civic groups affiliated to the opposition Sam Rainsy Party, which was critical of a supplemental border treaty with Viet Nam. He was charged with criminal defamation and incitement, and could face several years in prison. Three other members of the CWC, Chea Mony, Ea Channa and Men Nath, have also been charged and are sheltering abroad.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- welcoming the release on bail of Kem Sokha, Pa Nguon Teang, Rong Chhun, and Mam Sonando, and urging the authorities to withdraw the criminal charges against them;

- calling on the authorities to withdraw criminal complaints against all others who have only voiced peaceful dissent, and to ensure that the charges against them are dropped;
- asking the authorities to guarantee that all Cambodians will be able to enjoy the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

APPEALS TO:

Hun Sen
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Fax: +855 12 813 781
+855 23 360 666 (c/o Council of Ministers)
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Sar Kheng
Deputy Prime Minister, Co-Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior, 275 Norodom Blvd
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Fax: +855 23 21 27 08
+855 23 726 052
Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

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 1 March 2006.