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Cambodia: Release two innocent scapegoats once and for all

Two men wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for the killing of trade union leader Chea Vichea in 2004 must be freed, Amnesty International said today, ahead of their appeal hearing at Cambodia's Supreme Court on 25 September 2013.

Following a grossly unfair trial, Born Samnang, 32, and Sok Sam Oeun, 45, were sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2005 after being convicted for the murder a year earlier of Chea Vichea, the popular president of Cambodia's Free Trade Union.

After a campaign by human rights groups, the Supreme Court released the two men on bail on 31 December 2008 and ordered a retrial. But on 27 December 2012, four years after their provisional release, the Appeals Court upheld the original verdict and sent the pair back to prison, despite any new evidence being presented.

The two men appealed that latest decision, and the Supreme Court is set to hear their appeal tomorrow. Apart from a Royal Pardon, the hearing appears to be their last chance for freedom.

Considering the lack of evidence against Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun, the serious flaws to the criminal investigation against them, and numerous violations of their right to a fair trial, Amnesty International is calling for both men to be released immediately and unconditionally.

The human rights organization is appealing to the Cambodian authorities to free the pair from years languishing in prison for a crime they never committed. They should be allowed to go home to their families and move on with their lives. They should be released, once and for all.

For background and more detail on the case, see:

"Cambodia: Release scapegoats for killing of trade union leader", Amnesty International Press Release, 1 May 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/cambodia-release-scapegoats-killing-trade-union-leader-2013-05-01>

"Cambodia: Release Scapegoats for Labor Leader's Murder", Amnesty International Public Statement, 22 January 2008.
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA23/001/2008/en/94dcfa76-c849-11dc-bcf0-77fdb77e67d/asa230012008eng.pdf>

"Cambodia: The murder of trade unionist Chea Vichea: Still No Justice", Amnesty International Public Statement, 30 July 2006.
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA23/008/2006/en/7a925883-d40c-11dd-8743-d305bea2b2c7/asa230082006en.pdf>

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