

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 231/94 Possible extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 15 June 1994

CAMBODIA

**Killed: Tou Chhom Mongkol, Editor-in-Chief
Fear for safety: 2 editors (names unknown)**

other staff at Antarakhum newspaper

On 11 June 1994, Tou Chhom Mongkol, Editor-in-Chief of *Antarakhum* ("Intervention") newspaper, died in hospital in Phnom Penh from head injuries he had received the day before. The circumstances surrounding his death have given rise to fears that he was killed in connection to articles - printed in *Antarakhum* - critical of the Cambodian government. Amnesty International fears for the safety of two editors with whom Tou Chhom Mongkol met just before he died, and for the safety of other staff at the newspaper.

According to his colleagues, Tou Chhom Mongkol left the newspaper offices at about 5pm on 10 June to meet two of his editors. At about 9pm, he left the meeting to travel home by motorbike, to a southern part of the city. Three policemen later found him on one of the main roads in the city, unconscious. He was taken to hospital but died later from the effects of a single blow to the back of the head. The doctor who examined Tou Chhom Mongkol reported no other injuries on his body. His motorbike was found by his body, undamaged, and no valuables appeared to be have been stolen.

On 24 March 1994, two unidentified men on a motorbike were seen throwing a hand grenade into the *Antarakhum* office in Phnom Penh. The explosion wounded five people, including two newspaper employees. Although the police investigated the attack, no arrests were made, and no report into the case was ever made public. *Antarakhum* is a bi-weekly publication that covers a range of news stories. First published in July 1993, it resumed publication in February of this after a break of some months. It is often critical of the conduct of government officials.

Amnesty International has learned that the staff of several newspapers in Phnom Penh are being threatened and harassed by government security officials, and in recent weeks, three newspapers have been ordered to cease publication, after printing articles critical of the government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1993, under a United Nations-sponsored peace accord, 90% of Cambodia's electorate voted in democratic elections, following over 20 years of civil war, violent revolution and foreign occupation. A new coalition government was formed, and a new constitution was promulgated in September 1993. Cambodia is a signatory to the majority of international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The government has been slow to draft new legislation, and most of Cambodia's existing laws were written during the period of communist government in the 1980s. A new Press Law which went before Parliament in 1994 was widely criticised by human rights groups and journalists for the powers it gave to the government to shut down newspapers. This law has been withdrawn for further consultation, but at present, the Information Minister has the power to shut down newspapers critical of the government or the King.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes and airmail letters either

in French, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the violent death of *Antarakhum* Editor-in-Chief Tou Chhom Mongkol;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into his death, and that those responsible be brought promptly to justice;
- ensuring that adequate protection from harassment and violent attack is provided to the editors and staff at the newspaper;
- urging that the investigation into the grenade attack of 24 March 1994 on the newspaper offices be reopened following the death of Tou Chhom Mongkol;
- calling on the Royal Cambodian Government to ensure that journalists in Cambodia are not subject to harassment and intimidation by government security forces.

APPEALS TO**Samdech Krompreah Norodom Ranariddh**

First Prime Minister
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: HRH Norodom Ranariddh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Faxes: + 855 232 6144 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Excellency Hun Sen
Second Prime Minister
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: HE Hun Sen, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Faxes: + 855 232 6144 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Sar Kheng
Minister of Interior and National Security
Ministry of Interior and National Security
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: HE Sar Kheng, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Faxes: + 855 232 6144 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ieng Mouly
Minister of Information
Ministry of Information
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: Ieng Mouly, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Faxes: + 855 232 6144 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Dear Minister

Please note that it may be necessary to go through the international operator to send a fax to Cambodia.

Cambodia has almost no diplomatic representation in other countries.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 July 1994.