

UA 441/94 Possible extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 14 December 1994

CAMBODIA

Chan Dara, journalist at *Koh Santepheap* newspaper

Uch Saosarith, editor of *Preap Norm Sar* newspaper  
and other *Preap Norm Sar* journalists

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On 8 December 1994 journalist Chan Dara was shot twice in the back and killed as he rode his motorcycle away from a restaurant in Kompong Cham province. His killing has raised serious fears for the safety of staff at another newspaper with whom he had contact before he died.

Only two days before he was killed, Chan Dara had informed his newspaper in Phnom Penh, *Koh Santepheap*, that he had received warnings from the military police in Kompong Cham to stop his investigations into military involvement in the timber trade in the province. Furthermore, it is known that Chan Dara had contacts with journalists on a second newspaper, *Preap Norm Sar*, which, since it began publishing in November, has printed a series of articles on the illegal involvement of provincial military officials in the timber and rubber industries. *Koh Santepheap*, which supports the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), a partner in the coalition government, published only one article on the subject. However, Amnesty International has learned that the Kompong Cham authorities believe Chan Dara was passing information to journalists at *Preap Norm Sar* for publication.

In a press statement released on 9 December, the Cambodian Minister for Information said that he deplored all violent acts, and would be "particularly saddened if it is proven that the correspondent was killed for political reasons."

On 11 December, an army lieutenant colonel from Kompong Cham province was arrested in connection with the murder of Chan Dara, and is currently detained in Phnom Penh. However, journalists at *Preap Norm Sar* still fear for their safety. On 11 December, the police in Phnom Penh refused to provide protection to editor Uch Saosarith and his staff, and Amnesty International has learned that an unidentified man was seen watching the office of the newspaper on 13 December.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The killing of Chan Dara comes less than three months after journalist and newspaper editor Nuon Chan, whose newspaper printed articles highly critical of the government, was shot dead in the street in Phnom Penh. In July another editor, Nguon Non, was imprisoned over articles he had published following an attempted coup in the country. A new Press Law, soon to be debated by the National Assembly makes it a criminal offence to "publish anything which humiliates or degrades national organs or public authorities of the Kingdom of Cambodia". The draft law falls short of international human rights standards to which Cambodia is a state party. Cambodia has a relatively free press, instituted during the time of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (1992-93), but in recent months, journalists and editors have come under increasing pressure from the authorities not to publish articles critical of government ministers, policies, or the activities of members of the provincial authorities and the military.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send telegrams, faxes and airmail letters either in English, French or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the killing of journalist Chan Dara in Kompong Cham province, in what appears to be a politically-motivated attack;
- calling for a thorough, impartial investigation into the attack, and the events leading up to it;
- welcoming the arrest of a suspect, and calling on the authorities to ensure that he is provided with a fair and prompt trial, following due process of law;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that journalists and editors at *Preap Norm Sar* newspaper are provided with all necessary protection.

**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  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

His Excellency Sar Kheng  
 Minister of Interior and National Security  
 Office of the Council of Ministers  
 Phnom Penh  
 Cambodia

**Telegrams:** HE Sar Kheng, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
**Faxes:** + 855 232 6144  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

Ieng Mouly  
 Minister of Information  
 Office of the Council of Ministers  
 Phnom Penh  
 Cambodia

**Telegrams:** Ieng Mouly, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
**Faxes:** + 855 232 6144  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

**COPIES TO:**

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 27 January 1995.