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## **Cambodia: Human rights situation deteriorates as election results are challenged**

Phnom Penh-- As opposition parties in Cambodia challenged the unofficial results of last Sunday's election, Amnesty International delegates in Phnom Penh today drew attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

There is mounting evidence of widespread threats and intimidation of local activists from the main opposition parties which are contesting the results. In the five days since the polls, scores of opposition party supporters from the rural areas of the country have been making their way to the capital, seeking refuge in their party headquarters.

"One after another, terrified people are fleeing their villages in fear of their lives," Amnesty International said. "They have received death threats and their houses have been surrounded and shot at by security forces."

"Most of these rural activists come from areas where the opposition is challenging the poll results," Amnesty International said. "It is essential that the CPP-controlled security forces cease their intimidating behaviour immediately."

The Cambodian elections -- for which some international observers were present -- took place on 26 July. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has claimed victory in the polls, but many parties, including the two main opposition parties FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) have disputed the results, citing alleged counting fraud and other irregularities.

Amnesty International delegates in Phnom Penh have talked to FUNCINPEC and SRP activists in the days since the election, and all of them have similar complaints. In each case, individuals have been threatened because of their political activities for the opposition.

One FUNCINPEC supporter complained that no one would believe he had a security problem until his body was found after he had been killed. He has moved from house to house in fear of his life since the CPP-led coup in July 1997 which ousted FUNCINPEC Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh from power. Two days after the election the family house where his wife and children still live was shot at by security forces loyal to the CPP.

Amnesty International delegates observed armed soldiers keeping the SRP headquarters in Phnom Penh under surveillance late at night, as frightened activists from the surrounding area arrived to spend the night there, fearing to sleep at home.

Amnesty International called on the state security forces to send orders with immediate effect to all units to cease their harassment and intimidation of members of FUNCINPEC and SRP. The organization also called on the international community to face the reality of the situation in Cambodia and speak out to protect the vulnerable.

"The sense of foreboding among opposition party activists is palpable," Amnesty International said. "These people are not naive, their fears are well-founded. The only thing they cannot understand is the apparent indifference of the international community to their plight." ENDS.../

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**For further information or to arrange an interview, please phone Amnesty International Press Office on + 44 171 413 55 66**