

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 39/012/2003

17 November 2003

**Further Information on UA 309/02 (ASA 39/007/2002, 17 October 2002) and follow-up (ASA 39/008/2002, 29 November 2002) - Fear of forcible return/Prisoner of conscience/Health concern**

**THAILAND**

**Sok Yoeun [m], aged over 50**

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the fate and welfare of refugee and prisoner of conscience Sok Yoeun, who has been detained in a Thai prison since his arrest in December 1999. According to reports, his health has further deteriorated and he is said to be suffering from eye and knee problems. He reportedly has difficulty walking and is said to be severely depressed.

Sok Yoeun has been moved into a cell housing over 20 other people, all of whom are said to be suffering from health problems. He has had little contact with his wife and dependent children since his arrest, as they have been resettled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in a third country.

Sok Yoeun is still awaiting the result of an appeal against a decision taken by a Thai court in November 2002, to return him to Cambodia, following protracted extradition hearings. It is not known when the appeal decision will be given. However, in at least one similar case, the person concerned was forcibly returned to their country of origin from Thailand within 24 hours of losing a final appeal. If Sok Yoeun is returned to Cambodia, he would face unfair trial and possible torture and ill-treatment.

The Cambodian authorities have accused Sok Yoeun, who is a member of a Cambodian opposition party, of being responsible for a 1998 rocket attack, which Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed was aimed at him. This allegation is widely believed to be unfounded. Two other opposition party activists were arrested in Cambodia in connection with the attack, and were held incommunicado in the Military Detention Facility in the capital, Phnom Penh for six months. They were released in March 2000, after the investigating judge failed to find any evidence against them. They have since fled Cambodia and were resettled by UNHCR in another country.

Sok Yoeun himself fled Cambodia in September 1999 and sought asylum with his family in Thailand. He was granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in November 1999. He was arrested on 24 December 1999 after a Thai politician complained that Thailand was harbouring a Cambodian "terrorist". Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, issued a public demand at the time for Sok Yoeun's return to Cambodia. He was initially sentenced to six months' imprisonment for entering the country illegally. Since this sentence expired on 26 June 2000, he has remained in detention pending the outcome of a request for his extradition to Cambodia. This request was made under legislation that does not allow for the extradition of persons accused of political offences.

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

- expressing grave concern about the health and welfare of refugee and prisoner of conscience Sok Yoeun;
- urging the Thai authorities not to return Sok Yoeun to Cambodia, where he faces unfair trial, possible incommunicado detention and torture and ill-treatment;
- expressing concern at his prolonged detention, despite the fact that he has been recognized as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- reminding the Thai authorities that no state may return an individual to a country where he or she will face serious human rights violations;

-calling for his immediate and unconditional release, and allowing him to join his family who have been resettled by UNHCR in a third country;

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister

Thaksin Shinawatra  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Government House  
Pisanulok Road, Dusit  
Bangkok 10300  
Thailand

**Telegrams:** Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 282 8631

**Salutation:** Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Interior

Asdang Road  
Bangkok 10200  
Thailand

**Telegrams:** Interior Minister, Bangkok, Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 226 4371

**Salutation:** Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Surakiart Sathirathai  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Saranromya Palce  
Sri Ayudhya Road  
Bangkok 10400  
Thailand

**Telegrams:** Foreign Minister, Bangkok, Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 643 5180

**Salutation:** Dear Foreign Minister

**COPIES TO:**

Chief Justice of the Criminal Court

Praman Teeyapaiboonfit  
Criminal Court  
Ratchadapisak Road  
Jutujak  
Bangkok 10900  
Thailand

**Salutation:** Dear Chief Justice

and to diplomatic representatives of Thailand accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 December 2003.