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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Hong Kong - 0600 hrs gmt, 21 April - The embargo time for the Hong Kong news service item is confirmed as 0600 hrs gmt, Thursday 21 April 1994. The news item was enclosed in News Service 54/94, AI Index: ASA 19/WU 01/94, to go with the document Hong Kong and human rights: flaws in the system, AI Index: ASA 19/01/94. This report will be launched at a press conference in Hong Kong, at 11.00am Hong Kong time (0400 hrs gmt), at The Mariners Club, 11 Middle Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Pierre Robert and Chris Avery of the IS will be speaking on the panel. Robyn Kilpatrick is the contact person of the Hong Kong Section organizing the launch, Tel: +852 300 1250/1. If your national media has correspondents in Hong Kong that you would like to attend the press conference, please inform them of the details, giving Robyn's name and number as contact. SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Switzerland CAT - 19 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

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FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

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12 April 1994

KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA: ETHNIC VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS NEED PROTECTION FROM ATTACK

On 9 April, 13 people were killed, nine of them children, and 25 others injured in an attack on the ethnic Vietnamese village of Piem So, in the Treu Salar district of Kandal province 20 kilometres south of Phnom Penh.

Five men carrying hand grenades and AK-47 rifles ran into the village and threw grenades at a group of children playing on the road and at a middle-aged woman near the children. When the village chief emerged from a house to establish what was happening he was gunned down and killed. The attackers, all dressed in civilian clothes, then ran through the village throwing grenades and shooting at anyone in sight. At the end of the 10-minute attack, they poured petrol in two places and set parts of the village ablaze. As the men ran from the scene they shot a young woman and her 23-day-old baby. The woman died at once and the child lost an arm in the attack.

The ethnic Vietnamese community in Cambodia have been the target of ethnic violence for many years. During the recent United Nations sponsored peace initiative between November 1991 to September 1993, more than 140 ethnic Vietnamese civilians were killed. Most of the attacks were attributed to the forces of the Partie of Democratic Kampuchea, commonly known as the Khmer Rouge, and thousands of ethnic Vietnamese fled Cambodia to Viet Nam. Some 5,000 of those who fled the 1993 massacres remain stranded at the Cambodian border.

While it is not possible to positively identify the attackers at Piem So village, the violent attack follows a pattern of previous Khmer Rouge attacks on unarmed ethnic Vietnamese civilians. Piem So, a poor village of some 50 houses, is a long-established community of ethnic Vietnamese, many of whom were exiled from Cambodia during the years of Khmer Rouge rule in the 1970s. When the Khmer Rouge were ousted from power by a Vietnamese-led invasion in late 1978 many former residents of Piem So returned to their homes.

The United Nations Human Rights Centre in Phnom Penh has condemned the massacre at Piem So as "absolutely an ethnically motivated and planned attack". Amnesty International is concerned that the ethnic Vietnamese communities of Cambodia are not adequately protected by the government and its security forces against such attacks. While there is no suggestion that the government were involved in any way in the attack on Piem So, it is clear that these villagers, and many others like them throughout the country, are extremely vulnerable to ethnically motivated violence.

The new Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, which was adopted in October 1993, provides no protection to members of the community who are not of Khmer (Cambodian) origin. While it includes many measures to promote and protect human rights in Cambodia, they are specific to Khmer people and Khmer citizens. This leaves the ethnic Vietnamese community vulnerable. In the absence of legislation on citizenship and immigration, the ethnic Vietnamese community of Cambodia, many of whom have been living in the country for generations and have a legitimate claim to full citizenship, are not afforded any rights under the constitution.

Amnesty International has on several occasions in the past called upon the Royal Government of Cambodia to increase protection for its ethnic Vietnamese civilians. In the wake of the weekend's killings at Piem So village, Amnesty International renews its call to the Cambodian Government to ensure that all people in Cambodia are afforded the protection they need to enjoy the basic right to personal security.

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