

**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA/Thich Tri Luc (m), Buddhist monk
VIET NAM**

Thich Tri Luc, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and former prisoner of conscience seeking asylum in Cambodia, "disappeared" on 25 July. His whereabouts remain unknown. He was last seen leaving the guesthouse where he was staying in the capital Phnom Penh with an unidentified Vietnamese man.

Amnesty International fears for his safety, and is also gravely concerned that his disappearance may be linked to a possible attempt to forcibly return him to Viet Nam where he is at risk of imprisonment and other serious human rights violations.

Thich Tri Luc is a member of the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV) which is banned in Viet Nam. Members of the UBCV and other religious groups which are not officially approved by the state have been subject to harassment and imprisonment for many years. Thich Tri Luc fled from Viet Nam to Cambodia in April to seek asylum after suffering years of persecution by the authorities. He was granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in June. However, given that security and protection for Vietnamese asylum-seekers in Cambodia has become increasingly difficult, it is feared that he may be in danger of abduction and forcible return to Viet Nam.

Thich Tri Luc has been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International on two occasions. In 1992-1993 he was detained without charge or trial for 10 months in Viet Nam for protesting against the treatment of Buddhists and calling for the respect of religious freedom. He was arrested again in November 1994 with other UBCV monks and lay-people for participating in an unofficial relief mission to flood victims in the Mekong Delta. In August 1995 he was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment plus five years' surveillance. In between the periods spent in prison, Thich Tri Luc has been subjected to house arrest, harassment, short-term detention and deprivation of basic rights by the police because of his membership of the UBCV and his peaceful religious activities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cambodia is a state party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Importantly, Cambodia is bound by the principle of *non-refoulement*, set out in article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which prohibits the return of a person to a country where he/she would be at grave risk of human rights violations. The principle of *non-refoulement* is the cornerstone of international refugee protection.

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

- urging the Cambodian authorities to ensure that Thich Tri Luc is not forcibly returned to Viet Nam, where he would be at grave risk of human rights violations, including imprisonment;
- urging the Cambodian authorities to immediately investigate the current whereabouts of Thich Tri Luc, who was a person of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Phnom Penh when he went missing on 25 July;

- welcoming the fact that Cambodia is a state party to the UN Refugee Convention, and urging the authorities to comply with international standards for the protection of all refugees.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Hun Sen
Office of the Prime Minister
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia
Telegram: Prime Minister Hun Sen, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Fax: + 855 23 360666
Salutation: Your Excellency

Sar Kheng
Deputy Prime Minister and Co-Minister of Interior
275 Norodom Blvd
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia
Telegram: Deputy Prime Minister, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

Long Visalo
Secretary of State
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Tera Vithei Preah
Sisowath Blvd
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia
Telegram: Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Fax: + 855 23 216 144/939
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Cambodia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 September 2002.