

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 23/009/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 153
26 June 2003

Embargo Date: 26 June 2003 12:00 GMT

Torture and ill-treatment -- the scourge of Cambodia

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"
-- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5. Adopted 1948

"They tied me up and closed my eyes and then pointed at my ear with a pistol, threatened to kill me. They stepped and jumped on my ankles, which were toughly locked with cuffs. They used rubber bands to shoot on my scrotum. I hurt so terribly that I fainted many times. They poured the water on my body. When I woke up, they showed some documents with thumbprints, claiming that they were mine. Anyway, they forced me to acknowledge those documents as mine; otherwise, they would tyrannize my relatives. They tortured me and forced me to tell the judge that everything was true."

-- an account of torture in Prey Sar prison, Phnom Penh earlier this year received by Amnesty International.

June 26 is the United Nations International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture. To mark this sad day, Amnesty International is releasing a report -- a human rights review based on the Convention against Torture which was recently submitted to the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT). Cambodia's own initial report to the CAT was presented to the Committee for review in April this year.

Today, Amnesty International world-wide is also launching a new campaigning manual: *Combating Torture: a manual for action*. The manual brings together the standards and recommendations of the UN, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and other sources from around the world, as well as Amnesty International's recommendations, concerning the prevention of torture and ill-treatment.

The report on Cambodia issued today focuses on impunity which remains the organization's over-arching human rights concern in the country.

"Members of the police and military are able to impose their will on the civilian population and commit violations, knowing that they will never be called to account for their actions," said Amnesty International. The report highlights a number of individual cases where alleged perpetrators have either gone unpunished or received derisory official censure.

Amnesty International believes that, by and large, legal safeguards do exist in Cambodia to prevent torture.

"The problem in Cambodia is one of weak implementation and apparent lack of political will to put laws into practice and respect both letter and spirit of international treaties that Cambodia has signed up to," the organization emphasized.

The report gives numerous recommendations for the Cambodian government and also contains the UN Committee against Torture's provisional Conclusions and Recommendations to Cambodia.

Both the report and manual have been distributed to relevant government offices and NGOs in Cambodia but can also be accessed on the Amnesty International website.

For the full text of the report "*Kingdom of Cambodia: A human rights review based on the Convention against Torture*", please see:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa230072003>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>