

AI INDEX: ASA 23/13/98  
3 APRIL 1998

## **PUBLIC STATEMENT**

### **CAMBODIA**

#### **Human rights worker attacked – cycle of impunity continues**

Amnesty International today condemned yesterday's physical attack on a human rights worker in the capital, Phnom Penh.

A local employee of the Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was beaten up by a group of people which included police officers when he was looking into reports of a demonstration in a locality close to the river. While he was being beaten four police officers surrounded the UN-marked vehicle he and a colleague were travelling in and trained their guns on the driver. The attackers also threatened him verbally, claiming that they could kill him and nothing would happen to them. The human rights worker needed medical treatment for his injuries.

This is yet one more incident in a long list of human rights violations by security personnel, who know that they can carry out such actions with complete impunity.

In recent months senior government officials have openly criticized the work of UN human rights officials, particularly since the report of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia which gave details of dozens of extrajudicial executions since the violent ousting from power of First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh in July 1997.

Human rights defenders in Cambodia work under difficult and increasingly dangerous conditions, facing both veiled and open threats. They play an important role, not only in the protection of human rights but in the promotion of a free and secure climate for the forthcoming elections.

Amnesty International believes that no one should be subjected to such attacks and threats. The Royal Government needs to act quickly to both promote and ensure the security and safety of all human rights defenders in Cambodia.  
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