

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

25 April 1997

KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA Kong Sotha (f), parliamentarian

Amnesty International fears for the safety of Kong Sotha, a Member of Parliament (MP) from Kratie Province, who has not been seen by her family since 19 April 1997.

Kong Sotha is one of a group of 12 MPs from the FUNCINPEC political party who last weekend (18-20 April) signed a statement which expressed no confidence in party leader and First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh. The statement was made public by the 12 at the provincial home of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, who is also the leader of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Eight of the 12 have since returned to FUNCINPEC and there are credible indications that they felt intimidated when they gave their support to the statement.

During the Khmer New Year holiday (13 to 16 April) Kong Sotha went to Kratie province. Second Prime Minister Hun Sen sent a helicopter there to collect her and bring her to his home at Takmau, Kandal Province, from where the statement was made public. One of her family saw her very briefly on the 19 April, when she returned home in the company of a stranger in civilian clothes. She appeared to be very frightened and said only that she was in a hurry. Family members fear that she is being held against her will, as they have heard nothing from her since then, and do not know where she is.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cambodia has a coalition government, in which the two main parties are FUNCINPEC and the CPP. However, the government has become increasingly fragile in recent months, as tension between the two major parties, and in particular within the leadership of the government, has become more and more apparent. On 15 April, Ung Phan, a FUNCINPEC MP (who was formerly a CPP Party member) released a statement calling for the removal of Prince Ranariddh from his roles as Prime Minister and leader of FUNCINPEC. The apparent defection and then return of eight FUNCINPEC MPs means that votes in the National Assembly are currently finely balanced, and the loyalty of Kong Sotha to one party or the other may be seen by some senior politicians as particularly important.

Tensions in Cambodia remain high since a grenade attack on peaceful demonstrators on 30 March killed at least 16 people and injured over 100. The demonstrators were from the unrecognised opposition Khmer Nation Party (KNP), led by Sam Rainsy, a former finance minister and FUNCINPEC MP. The KNP has recently joined an electoral alliance with FUNCINPEC, for elections due in Cambodia in 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Kong Sotha MP, who has not been seen by her family since 19 April;
- asking for details about her health and whereabouts, and for assurances that she is not being detained against her will;
- urging that Kong Sotha be given immediate access to her family, and that she be allowed to exercise her fundamental rights to freedom of association and freedom of movement.

APPEALS TO:

Samdech Krompreah Norodom Ranariddh
First Prime Minister
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Faxes: +855 234 26054

Telegrams: HRH Norodom Ranariddh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Excellency Hun Sen
Second Prime Minister
Office of the Council of Ministers,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: HE Hun Sen, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Sar Kheng
Minister of Interior
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: HE Sar Kheng, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Salutation: Your Excellency

You Hok Kry
Minister of Interior
Office of the Council of Ministers
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telegrams: You Hok Kry, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 June 1997.