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£KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

@Concern for the safety of elected representatives

22 JUNE 1995

AI INDEX: ASA 23/11/95

DISTR: SC/CO

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of the Cambodian National Assembly who have made strong statements in support of Sam Rainsy, the former Minister of Economics and Finance, who was expelled from the National Assembly today. The organization is calling upon the Royal Cambodian Government to guarantee the safety of all members of the National Assembly, regardless of their political views.

On 19 June 1995, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly met to vote on the case of Sam Rainsy. The former Finance Minister had been expelled from his political party FUNCINPEC¹, because of the statements he had made criticising the conduct of its leaders in the government, including First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh. The First Prime Minister then requested that Sam Rainsy be expelled from the Assembly, on the grounds that he was no longer affiliated to a political party. Although international legal experts expressed the opinion that the expulsion was illegal under the electoral law drafted by the United Nations for the 1993 Cambodian elections, the expulsion was carried in a vote by the Standing Committee. Three members of the Committee voted against the expulsion, among them Ahmad Yahya, a FUNCINPEC member, and Kem Sokha, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Reception of Complaints, and a member of the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP).

This morning in the National Assembly, the deputy chairman Loy Sim Chheang (FUNCINPEC), read out a statement announcing that Sam Rainsy was no longer a member of the National Assembly. He then suspended the session for the rest of the day. Both Kem Sokha and Sam Rainsy had tried to speak but were denied permission. As the Assembly members left the chamber, Sam Rainsy delivered a speech, calling on them to act according to their conscience and the law. Kem Sokha and Ahmad Yahya also

¹ FUNCINPEC is the French acronym for the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia.

delivered short speeches, in favour of Sam Rainsy, as the members left. Kem Sokha and Ahmad Yahya have both spoken up in support of human rights in Cambodia since taking their seats in the National Assembly.

Amnesty International is aware of death threats made against a number of outspoken National Assembly members and journalists in the last year, apparently because of the peaceful expression of their political views. Sam Rainsy and members of his family have received such threats in the recent past, while in September 1994, Nuon Chan, the editor of the Cambodian newspaper *Voice of Khmer Youth*, which had supported Sam Rainsy's political views, received a number of warnings from the Royal Government about the content of his newspaper. The previous editor resigned in July 1994, having received threats to his life. Nuon Chan was shot dead in Phnom Penh on the afternoon of 7 September 1994. No one has been brought to justice for his killing. More recently two newspaper editors have been sentenced to prison terms for articles they have published criticising members of the Royal Cambodian Government.

In the last year, Amnesty International has noted with concern the steady undermining of the rights to freedom of expression and association in Cambodia, and it fears for the safety of all those who advocate political views critical of the government. In a major report published in March 1995, the organization stated that "*the Cambodian Government has a special duty to ensure that journalists, editors, human rights workers and members of political parties are able to carry out their legitimate activities... and to express their peaceful opinions without risk.*"² Earlier this month, it called upon the Royal Cambodian Government to provide adequate guarantees for the safety of all elected representatives and their families, and to uphold the rights to freedom of opinion and expression in the country.³ Amnesty International today renews this call, and in particular asks that the Royal Cambodian Government ensure the safety of those members of the National Assembly who have criticised the expulsion of Sam Rainsy, notably Kem Sokha and Ahmad Yahya.

KEYWORDS: PARLIAMENTARIANS1 / HARASSMENT / EDITORS / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION /

² See Amnesty International *Kingdom of Cambodia: Human Rights and the new government* (ASA 23/02/95) p67.

³ See Amnesty International *Kingdom of Cambodia: Sam Rainsy MP: Concern for the safety of an elected representative* (ASA 23/09/95).

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