

UN rights experts condemn killing of Cambodian political analyst and activist Kem Ley

GENEVA (13 July 2016) – A group of United Nations human rights experts* today condemned the murder of Cambodian political analyst and social activist Kem Ley, known for his struggle for justice and human rights in Cambodia.

“We are shocked to learn about the death of Mr. Kem Ley. We call for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the crime that ensures no perpetrator goes unpunished. This investigation should be conducted by an independent body with no ties to the government,” they said.

Mr. Kem Ley, who was shot dead at a convenience store in a petrol station on 10 July, was the founder of the grassroots network Khmer for Khmer and a prominent political commentator who had frequently criticised the government. His network had recently registered the Grassroots Democracy Party with the intention of fielding candidates for local elections in 2017. Prior to his civic engagement work, he had had a prominent role in the HIV and health sector for many years.

“The circumstances of Mr. Kem Ley’s death have given rise to deep concerns in view of his standing as a critic of the government and his regular comments in the media highlighting governance and human rights concerns,” the experts said.

The Special Rapporteurs welcomed the Cambodian Government’s commitment for a thorough investigation into the crime, and emphasised that they will be following it closely. “Every person responsible should be brought to justice,” the UN human rights experts stressed.

The UN human rights experts also called upon the Cambodian government to urgently implement effective protection measures to safeguard those active in the civic sphere, against such crimes in the future.

“This shooting exemplifies an alarming negative trend in Cambodia whereby political activists and human rights defenders are facing increasing restrictions to exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms,” the experts said. “The authorities must act swiftly to reverse this trend as this killing is likely to have a chilling effect on the pursuit of democracy and human rights in Cambodia.”

ENDS

(*) **Mr. Michel Forst**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, **Ms. Rhona Smith**, Special Rapporteur on Cambodia, **Mr. David Kaye**, Special

Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, **Mr. Maina Kiai**, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and **Mr. Christof Heyns**, Special Rapporteur on summary or arbitrary executions are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity

Learn more, log on to:

Human rights defenders:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/SRHRDefendersIndex.aspx>

Human rights in Cambodia:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/KH/Pages/SRCambodia.aspx>

Freedom of expression:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx>

Freedoms of assembly and association:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/AssemblyAssociation/Pages/SRFreedomAssemblyAssociationIndex.aspx>

Summary executions:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Executions/Pages/SRExecutionsIndex.aspx>

UN Human Rights, country page – Cambodia:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KHIndex.aspx>

For more information and **media requests** please contact Mr. Thibaut Guillet (+41 22 917 96 74 / tguillet@ohchr.org).

For your news websites and social media: Multimedia content & key messages relating to our news releases are available on UN Human Rights social media channels, listed below. Please tag us using the proper handles:

Twitter: [@UNHumanRights](https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights)

Facebook: [unitednationshumanrights](https://www.facebook.com/unitednationshumanrights)

Instagram: [unitednationshumanrights](https://www.instagram.com/unitednationshumanrights)

Google+: [unitednationshumanrights](https://plus.google.com/+unitednationshumanrights)

Youtube: [unohchr](https://www.youtube.com/unohchr)