



Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
for Human Rights in Cambodia

តំណាងពិសេសរបស់លោកអគ្គលេខាធិការទទួលបន្ទុកសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



Statement by Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg, Special Representative of the  
Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia  
1 July 1998

In connection with the publication of the attached report, the Special Representative has made today the following recommendation:

“The Special Representative calls on all political parties to take action within their own ranks to prevent any tendency towards intimidation or incitement to violence. It is essential that the Government live up to its pledges to ensure serious investigations into all instances of violence, and in particular when circumstances are such that political motives might be suspected. For human rights to be protected and the election campaign to be conducted in a free and fair environment it is important that steps are taken to enforce strict political neutrality of the government administration at all levels.”

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General  
for Human Rights in Cambodia

MONITORING OF ELECTION-RELATED INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE

Report (15 to 27 June 1998)

This report has been compiled by the Cambodia Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (COHCHR) on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Human Rights in Cambodia.

Summary:

During the reporting period the COHCHR has received reports of killings involving eleven victims, as well as one report of an attempted killing which resulted in serious injuries. The COHCHR is examining these reports to ascertain facts and, where possible, assess motives. At least four of the killings present political aspects. They are described below.

Over one hundred and forty allegations of political intimidation or violence have been received by the COHCHR since mid-May, and have been or are being investigated. Their nature is described below and the full list is appended to this report. Among significant instances are the attempted abduction of the editor of a FUNCINPEC-affiliated newspaper on 19 June in Phnom Penh; the arrest and imprisonment of Lim Pheng in Kompong Cham; and four separate instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and intimidation or beatings of members of political parties by the authorities of a neighborhood in Phnom Penh.

In addition, COHCHR staff and European Union observers have been intimidated on four occasions. Office staff were twice followed in Kompong Cham. In Prey Veng, Office staff were investigating a murder when shots were fired from a car at a nearby opposition party signboard. A similar incident occurred a week earlier in front of an EU observer team in the same province.

Full Report:

Allegations of killings received by the COHCHR during the reporting period and currently being investigated:

- Phin Phon, 32, a former FUNCINPEC member who recently joined the Reastr Niyum Party, was summarily executed by two unidentified men on the evening of June 14 in his village in Kampong Trabek district of Prey Veng province. The perpetrators entered his home, tied his hands behind him, forced him to the floor and demanded a quantity of gold. When he replied he had no gold, only cows, they replied they would take the cows. They marched him outside the house, with his hands still tied, and shot him dead with three bullets about 150 metres from the house. No cows or other significant property were taken. His body showed signs of having been beaten. On 12 June, an official of the

Reastr Niyum party visited the village, which has more than 130 party supporters, made a speech and distributed rice to supporters. During the event, the commune chief reportedly ordered the party official to leave the village immediately and threatened to kill supporters who attended the meeting. Phin Phon reportedly remonstrated that villagers had come to listen to the speech. On the following day, the village chief summoned villagers who had attended the meeting, reprimanded them and confiscated CPP “gift cards”. Two suspects in the murder, including a relative of the victim and the deputy commune chief, were arrested on June 22 by the police who concluded that the murder was a revenge related to a family dispute over money-sharing. Several possible motives have emerged in the preliminary investigation and the case warrants further examination.

- The body of Em Iem, a Sam Rainsy Party district official, was exhumed by family members and COHCHR staff from a shallow grave in Tbong Khmum district of Kompong Cham province on June 19, 1998. The examination of the body showed that the nose and neck had been broken. The body also displayed other marks suggesting he had been tortured (pictures available). Em Iem had gone missing nine days earlier, after he had left home to return to work at the district party office. He had no known history of significant problems with fellow villagers, but his death followed several documented threats against him and other supporters of the Sam Rainsy Party by local government officials. Initial findings indicate a possible political motive. The governmental Cambodian Human Rights Committee, in its first report, quoted senior provincial officials as saying this murder appeared to be neither robbery nor revenge.
- Mrs Mom Yeng, 49, was shot dead by an unidentified assailant at around 7:30 on the evening of June 14 in Kampong Trabek district, Prey Veng province. She was shot from underneath the bamboo floor of her raised house while seated, weaving a straw mat. She was found dead by one of her children the following morning. Mom Yeng was a FUNCINPEC member and the second wife of a district government official who is a well-known and active FUNCINPEC deputy-district representative in Kampong Trabek in charge of security. Mom Yeng was killed at around the same time and in the same district as Phin Phon – see above). National radio, quoting initial police findings, stated on 22 June that the murder was related to a family dispute. Initial COHCHR enquiries have revealed indications of both a family dispute as well as a possible political motive, making it difficult at present to rule either out. The investigation is continuing.

Other cases include the attempted killing of FUNCINPEC member Ham Pres on June 19 in Prey Chor district of Kompong Cham province (Ham Pres lost both eyes and was still in a coma when he was discharged from the hospital on June 27); the killing of Mrs Meas Chanthou on the night of June 11 in Tbong Khmum district, Kompong Cham; the killing of FUNCINPEC member Chan Vichet on June 23 in Kandieng district, Pursat province; and the killing of FUNCINPEC activist Thong Sophâl who disappeared on June 16 in Muk Kampul, Kandal province and was found on June 27. The COHCHR is also looking into the killing of five people, including two deminers, during a June 18 attack by unidentified soldiers in Banteay Meanchey province.

Other significant allegations of intimidation and violence related to the elections during the reporting period are:

- The attempted abduction of a journalist:

On the evening of June 19 two unidentified men wearing plain clothes and riding a motorcycle approached Sen Sachak, editor of the Khmer language newspaper Kumnet Koun Khmer, and made an unsuccessful attempt to abduct him. The incident took place on a main street in central Phnom Penh. The motives are not immediately clear, but the same individuals had followed and enquired about him on several previous occasions. Kumnet Koun Khmer is a newspaper affiliated with FUNCINPEC, which has voiced support to the armed opposition of Gen. Nhek Bun Chhay and often uses inflammatory anti-Vietnamese language. A previous editor of the same newspaper was shot and badly injured in January 1997. No one was brought to justice.

■ The arrest and detention of Lim Pheng in Kompong Cham:

Lim Pheng, 23, was arrested in Kompong Cham on 4 June, one day after the police had been summoned to investigate a shooting aimed at a Sam Rainsy party sign board posted in front of his house. The police initially alleged that an AK-47 found in the home was the weapon used to shoot the party sign board. When evidence contradicted this claim, the police then accused him of illegal possession of weapons. Available evidence indicates that the weapon did not belong to Lim Pheng but to another relative, who is a soldier. Lim Pheng was sentenced to a year in jail. He was not given the right to counsel, no warrant was issued, and the evidence to substantiate the charge is in doubt.

■ A series of incidents involving the arbitrary arrest, detention, intimidation and beating of at least 4 members of opposition parties by village authorities in the Tonle Bassac quarter of Phnom Penh are being investigated:

22 June: arrest, temporary detention and harassment of a Sam Rainsy Party female activist and local commune government official by village authorities. She was told, at gunpoint, to halt her political activities. The morning of her arrest she had been ambushed and severely beaten by a group of women in the presence of local authorities.

23 June: arrest, temporary detention and intimidation of a Sam Rainsy bodyguard. He was warned not to wear a Sam Rainsy T-shirt when entering the village because this was a “CPP village” and people “would not welcome supporters of opposition parties”. He was warned that if he was beaten or killed should he re-enter the village, he would not be protected by the authorities.

25 June: arrest, temporary detention and beating of a Sam Rainsy Party sympathizer by the Village 15 security chief;

These incidents were preceded by the arrest, temporary detention and beating on June 9 of a policeman affiliated with the FUNCINPEC party, allegedly for having opposed the collection of voter registration cards, late at night, by Village 15 authorities. A COHCHR staff member was beaten earlier this year by a group of villagers and local security official after he had entered the same village. The village office is located opposite the Sam Rainsy party headquarters.

■ Intimidation and threats against COHCHR and EU staff:

On June 10 and 15 two COHCHR staff members in Kompong Cham were followed by unidentified persons. These incidents coincided with the investigation by the office of a

human rights case which appears to be politically motivated.

Shots were fired at opposition party signboards on June 14 in Prey Veng province in the immediate vicinity of a COHCHR team which was investigating the case of a possible political murder.

A village chief fired repeated shots over the heads of an EU observer team at a registration center in Prey Veng province on June 11. The last round of AK fire came within meters of the team.

## **ALLEGATIONS OF INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE: AN OVERVIEW**

More than one hundred and forty allegations of political intimidation and/or violence have been received by the COHCHR since mid-May and are being verified and assessed. They are appended to this report. The majority involve intimidation of voters (actions by local authorities aimed at dissuading people from voting according to their free will) and irregularities in voter registration and campaigning which involve an element of intimidation. They have taken the form of death threats, acts of violence against individuals, illegal arrests and detention, forced removal or destruction of party signboards or shootings at party offices, the thumbprint campaign, temporary confiscation of voter cards by local authorities, attempts to coerce the political allegiance of villagers, threats to be denied development assistance or protection, party representatives being denied access to communities by local officials, as well as attempts to coerce through threats party representatives to provide their membership lists.

These allegations, recorded over a five-week period, illustrate widespread political intimidation and abuse. They reflect a general climate of pressure and fear which is particularly noticeable in the countryside. There, monitors have observed that open opposition party presence and activities is limited at the provincial level and virtually non-existent below the district level. With a few exceptions, perpetrators have been local government authorities (group, village, commune or district administrative or security officials) acting on behalf of a political party instead of in a neutral manner. The allegations in this report only represent the information which the Office was able to collect and document so far. It does not cover all incidents taking place.