



PRESS RELEASE

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THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA
CONDEMNS UNRESERVEDLY
THE RECENT MASSACRE OF 12 CIVILIANS IN PURSAT PROVINCE

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Human Rights in Cambodia, I condemn unreservedly the killing by armed elements of the Democratic Kampuchea army (the "Khmer rouge") of 12 unarmed villagers in Kandieng district of Pursat Province on the night of 17 May 1996.

Among the killed victims were 11 Vietnamese and 1 Cambodian. Six of them were children, aged 2 to 12, and three others were elderly persons aged over 75. At least 8 other persons were injured, some severely.

The attack took place at about midnight while villagers were asleep, in Korkeo, a floating fishing village located in Reang Tael commune, Kandieng district, in Pursat. Some of the 20-30 assailants were identified as members of a division of the Democratic Kampuchea army active for years in this region.

In one reported instance a family was sleeping in its fishing boat, when an assailant jumped into it, lifted the mosquito net under which all four were sleeping, and opened fire killing the three children and the mother. A 10 year old girl was shot and killed after she had jumped into the water with a relative to escape the attack. Her mother was shot in the legs and then finished off with a rifle round while her grandmother was killed with an axe.

To my knowledge, this is the first ethnically-motivated attack of Vietnamese civilians to occur in Cambodia since 20 May 1995, when Khmer rouge soldiers killed 4 Vietnamese villagers and a Cambodian policeman in Kompong Thom Province. During the transitional period (1991-1993) over a hundred Vietnamese civilians were massacred by Democratic Kampuchea elements, which provoked the exodus of an estimated 35,000 refugees toward the border of Vietnam. Since the formation of the new Government, at least 48 Vietnamese and 4 Cambodians have been reportedly killed and 35 others were injured in some 15 ethnically-motivated attacks in Cambodia. Two thirds of the victims were women and children.

Twelve of these attacks were conducted by Democratic Kampuchea elements. The others three have been attributed by witnesses to Government security forces or to civilians. In none of these

Mr. Thomas Hammarberg

Stockholm : Rosenbad 4, P.O. Box 16121, S. 10323 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: 0046-8-405 5646 Fax: 0046-8-723 1176

Phnom Penh : Centre for Human Rights, P.O. Box 108, Street 400, House 18, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: 855-23-362585/362797 Fax: 855-23-720030
E-mail: chrcambodia@nactok.pcg.apc.org

instances have the perpetrators been brought to justice.

There is no excuse or justification for such despicable criminal acts against defenseless civilians by armed men. These acts are contrary to the most elementary notion of humanitarian law and principles.

I understand that the Royal Government has no control over the Democratic Kampuchea forces and as a result, it may not be in a position apprehend those responsible for these murders. However, I encourage the Royal Government to make every efforts to investigate thoroughly the murders on 17 May and to bring those responsible to justice. I also recommend that the Government consider the adoption of adequate security measures to ensure the protection of the life and safety of all fishing communities, including the Vietnamese, and particularly those exposed to violence in the vicinity of contested zones and other insecure areas.

I also call on the assistance of the international community, and particularly states signatories to the Paris Agreements which are in a position to exert pressure on the Khmer Rouge, to endeavor to make these criminal activities stop and help bring those responsible to justice.