



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

គំណាចពិសេសរបស់លោកអគ្គលេខាធិការទទួលបន្ទុកសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



Statement by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia on the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials on 5 December 2002

12 December 2002

The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia is deeply concerned about the use of excessive force to break up a peaceful gathering in Phnom Penh on 5 December 2002.

At least seven people received medical treatment after police and gendarmerie violently dispersed a group of approximately 150 representatives of forest-dependent communities outside the Government's Department of Forestry and Wildlife. The representatives were awaiting a response regarding the Department's participation in a workshop concerning forest management plans.

In order to disperse the non-violent crowd, law enforcement officials hit, kicked and used electro-shock batons on the gathered women and men. One of the representatives present, Hem Sao, a 29 year-old village chief from Preah Vihear province, died a few hours later. It will need to be established whether his death was related to the crackdown, and in particular to the use of electro-shock weapons during a rainstorm. It is well known that electro-shock weapons have the potential to cause serious injury and death through heart failure.

Electro-shock weapons were notably deployed in Cambodia when authorities moved to break up the demonstrations that followed the 1998 National Elections. The recurrence of such violent means of crowd control is particularly worrying given the impending National Elections in 2003.

The Special Representative calls upon the Government of Cambodia to take firm action against those responsible for the use of excessive force and to immediately ban the use of electro-shock weapons for the purpose of crowd control.