

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

I want to congratulate Adhoc and Licadho for having received the 1998 Roger Baldwin Medal. This is a prestigious international prize for outstanding contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights. It is an honor for Cambodia that two of its national organizations have received this reward.

I have personally been impressed by the work of Adhoc and Licadho: the commitment and competence of their activists, the integrity of their programmes. I have been encouraged by Adhoc's important contribution to developing the NGO alliance COMFREL which is now playing a crucial role in voter education and observing the elections.

Likewise, I have appreciated the constructive work by Licadho in contributing to the improvement of prison conditions and to the abolition of torture.

It is well deserved that representatives of the non-governmental human rights community in Cambodia receive this year's Roger Baldwin human rights prize.

PRESS RELEASE

1998 Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty Awarded to Two Cambodian Human Rights Organizations

New York, 20 July 1998 – The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights today announced the award of the 1998 Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty jointly to two distinguished Cambodian human rights organizations, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) and the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC).

“ADHOC and LICADHO exemplify the qualities of integrity, professionalism and courage that today characterize hundreds of national human rights organizations around the world,” said Michael Posner, executive director of the Lawyers Committee. “Such organizations are key to the future health of societies, like Cambodia, that are struggling to overcome legacies of violence and massive human rights violations.”

LICADHO, founded in 1992, has been the principal source of objective and reliable data on human rights violations in Cambodia, and has carried out extensive grassroots education to raise awareness of human rights issues. ADHOC, founded in 1991 by a group of former political prisoners, monitors human rights violations, conducts investigations and files complaints with the Cambodian authorities, and has carried out extensive voter education in preparation for the July 26 elections. Both groups rely on a nationwide network of field offices and volunteers, and have been an indispensable source of information to the Office of the UN Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia.

"This is the first time the award has ever been made jointly to two recipients," Posner said. "This decision reflects not only the distinctive quality of each organization's work, but the seriousness of the human rights situation in Cambodia, which ADHOC and LICADHO have done so much to bring to the world's attention. The future security and well-being of independent human rights monitors in Cambodia is of the utmost importance to the international community."

The Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty is named in honor of Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the International League for Human Rights, and a leading voice for human rights both in the United States and internationally. The award is jointly administered by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and the ACLU. It is made every two years to an individual or organization outside the United States that has made a distinguished contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights. In alternate years, the award goes to a group or individual within the United States. The Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty brings with it a monetary award of US\$25,000. Past winners of the international award have been the Civil Liberties Organization of Nigeria (1970), the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (1992), the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (1994) and the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Northern Zone of the Isthmus (UCIZONI) of Mexico (1994).

LICADHO (Eva Galabru) can be contacted at telephone nos. 023 427 626 and 023 364 901. ADHOC (Thun Saray) can be contacted at telephone nos. 023 218653, 023 982407 and fax no. 023 217229.

Since 1978, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights has worked to protect and promote fundamental human rights. Its work is impartial, holding each government to the standards affirmed in the International Bill of Rights.

For interviews with Lawyers Committee representatives, please contact L. Camille Massey at (212) 845 5225: massey@lchr.org or Tally Goldstein at (212) 845 5257; goldsteint@lchr.org For more information, please visit its website at: <http://www.lchr.org>.