



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

តំណាងពិសេសរបស់លោកអគ្គលេខាធិការអង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិសម្រាប់កម្ពុជា



TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY Mrs. MARY ROBINSON, UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE ROYAL PHNOM PENH HOTEL ON 24 JANUARY 1998 AT 18:00.

As I think you know, I made a very deliberate and personal choice to come here to Cambodia very early on my mandate, but also I think that the time is very important for this country. I have been following the events very closely here in Cambodia, indeed, I again follow them particularly closely, even before I took up my mandate as High Commissioner and Thomas Hammarberg, as Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia, in early September went to see me in Dublin before I assumed this responsibility. We discussed the issues of the killings in July of the August Memorandum, at that time, there was a very clear commitment to investigate which is a very positive sense of moving forward and a very serious issue at that time.

I am very keen to support the field operations and of my Office and the work done by the Centre and the regional field offices, which is very important, complex, and wide-ranging work in supporting, promoting and protecting and safeguarding human rights. I have been very glad this afternoon to have an opportunity to meet my colleagues and to promote their works and to support them and also encourage the conduct working commitment that they are showing. I am glad that their work was recognized by the two Prime Ministers and by the Minister of Justice and in assuring that the work of the Centre is supported and recognized. It has also been very much recognized by the NGO community.

I also welcomed the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Government, with my UN colleagues and with the NGOs community. During my stay to have opportunities to meet the Court of Kandal to see part of the Judicial Mentor Programme to be good and the prison feeding and to see also the aspects of the work which have been done to improve the conditions in the prison and also to engage in the very important issues relating to women and children's rights and violence against women. So it is important ----- shelter for women ----- to seek refuge and discussed with the NGOs community and many of their officials. So it has been very broad-ranging and as far as I am concerned a very important opportunity to assess the problem we knew and this critical time here in Cambodia.

I am very happy to answer your question in details about the issues you raise:

- 1. Question by AFP inaudible.

HC: I think It is very evident that I worked very closely with them, indeed, both support and value the commitment and work of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Human Rights, Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg. As I said he came, even before I took up my responsibility and mandate to discuss with me. The Second Prime Minister Hun Sen indicated to speak frankly to me and that he chose to do so and without Thomas Hammarberg being there. Naturally, I discussed this in detail with Thomas Hammarberg and on the basis of our discussion, deliberations and consideration, I decided to have a frank and open meeting because I welcomed this and the constraints issues and discuss them. It was a very useful meeting at my request it was a meeting between basically principles a smaller meeting that I was happy mostly that I decided. I think it was a useful meeting because it was quite clearer that it is going to be really divided but it was very positive working relationship and support between us and also if it was possible, I think to make some progress on certain political issues, particularly, in fact that the Second Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed to the ----- of an international expert looking at the state of the examination so far at government level. I remember different versions of how far that progress have not been reacted and investigation in Tuol Sleng. I was also interested as the High Commissioner to expedite the process of the investigation and I was very clear that the Second Prime Minister accepted that that would be helpful in relation to the July incident. I was also pleased that the Second Prime Minister Hun Sen confirmed that the Government welcomed the proposal, indeed that the proposal of Thomas Hammarberg that a group of experts come and do a preliminary examination of the earlier terrible time of the Khmer Rouge regime and that look at possibility of a thorough investigation of that. So we have full and frank discussion and I believe at the end that it was a very positive discussion. The Second Prime Minister made very clear that the work of the Centre that he considered to be of importance and that it will continue.

2. Question inaudible

HC: But the Government had agreed to the proposal that I had put forward at that meeting as the High Commissioner to seek to expedite the matter. The proposal was that an independent criminal investigator who had experience with investigation would come and look at the material such as it is, preliminary inquiry such as it is and then advise on how to progress the investigation and that was accepted as to be helpful by the Second Prime Minister Hun Sen. I think that it is a way of expediting the process.

3. Question inaudible.

HC: As far as I we are concerned it went long and deliberately the incident had occurred on 30 of March and killing came along the way the demonstration and as government workers were assembling peacefully which -- basic rights. I met some of the survivors and whether at that time it reinforced my concern that -- . My concern is that the incident of 30 of March and the extra-judicial killing cases in July and other issues concerning impunity have to be seriously investigated. I think it is extremely important that this is emphasized and that very determination of Thomas Hammarberg and I think in short the focus will not go away and it is also part of preparing for an environment for free and fair elections.

4. Question inaudible.

HC: No, I think there was a wider balance than that because I disliked that I had -----
--- with the two Prime Ministers and the Minister of Justice and we ran it over whole
relevant matters and number issues that I wish to raise as High Commissioner for
Human Rights. This was also included in the progress on human rights which is now
my concern as High Commissioner. ----- and that the magistrate body has been
established immediately. Constitution also requires that there should be a
Constitutional Council and that this is necessary for the conduct of election under the
Constitution which is a good Constitution here and contribute to the structure of that
Constitution and I had full opportunity which I took very clearly to raise issues of
impunity and to reinforce the work that Thomas Hammarberg has been doing as a
special representative and to also this is another very important dimension of a
country which is Cambodia to listen to the views of the government. Poverty is a
great denial of human rights. Lack of access to education is a great denial of human
rights. And issues of child prostitution and the range of other issues that both NGOs
and government representatives talked on issues of concern to me as High
Commissioner. So I was happy that I had all the opportunity I needed. The purpose
is quite broad but it was also very strong.

5. Question

HC: I haven't seen the detail of the proposal in relation to funding but I recall
specifically that at the meeting with the First Prime Minister, he --- that there are
conditionalities..... Now I will have to look into detail...

6. Question

HC: I'm not on the political side of that dimension. I am concerned that the officer,
the Center and Thomas Hammarberg that the conditions, the objective conditions of
fair and free elections be established and that is our focus and I think we will be very
closely with monitoring and looking at the situation speaking about the objective
criteria that the freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, free access to media,
the full participation of political parties. These are the objective criteria.

7. Question

HC: I think that it would be important to see that the quality of work and
professionalism and of the Center and the staff here. It is extremely important, these
are serious matters. And the Memorandum ... a preliminary and it was very
carefully drawn up and presented by Thomas Hammarberg. I think that the
transliteration was justified by the fact that on checking facts it was the misspelling of
the surname which has made the issue. In fact it had been brought forward in a
dramatized way yesterday.

8. Question

HC:The welcomed Second prime Minister Hun Sen. Changes of staff. To be valued
... by the Director of the Center, Rosemary McCreery. In relation to Special
Representative Thomas Hammarberg, I made it very clear that ... important work
Thomas Hammarberg has done his commitment, this is his 7th visit, and in
exercising his mandate as special representative. I emphasize the ... international
level close following particularly at this critical time and in this country of his work
and his commitment about work and the ... and integrity with stature at the
international level.

9. Question

HC: I had raised this issue in relation to both... . I want to proceed further ... because I have been very concerned in discussing with NGOs who have been particularly working in this area with the staff and colleagues who have been supporting ..I talked to a 16-year old who had been tortured .. to work in a garment factory. she ended up being deliberately ... until she managed to escape after about three months. First time ... civilized and civil attempt to recover human dignity from a humiliation of that. I explained as HC it is a priority of mine. Will be a priority throughout my mandate. To address issues of violence against women and against children...