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ការិយាល័យនៃឧត្តមស្នងការអង្គបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) welcomes reports that voting in the Election of Members of the 4th Mandate of the Cambodian National Assembly, on 27 July 2008, took place in an atmosphere that was for the most part peaceful and free of violence.

OHCHR's monitoring has not concerned itself with the technical execution of the elections. Its focus, rather, is on the most serious allegations of violence and intimidation before, during and after the elections, and aimed at determining whether these acts occurred and were politically motivated. The Office today releases its preliminary observations.

Having examined the allegations of killings and suspicious deaths of grassroots political activists that have come to its knowledge since the start of 2008, the Office has to date found no credible evidence that they were politically motivated. This welcome development contrasts sharply with previous national legislative polls, which were plagued with political violence. However, OHCHR remains gravely concerned about the murders on 11 July of Khim Sambor, a journalist for the opposition-affiliated newspaper *Moneaksekar Khmer*, and his son Khat Sarinpheata. The Office reiterates its call for the authorities to conduct a credible investigation into this case and bring the perpetrators to justice. The Office further notes that there have been no arrests in the majority of killing cases that it has examined in 2008, including those in which no political motivation is suspected, and that evidence exists in some cases of murders being officially labelled as deaths by natural causes or misadventure. The Office has repeatedly stated its concerns about the devastating impact of such impunity on the Cambodian social and political environment, irrespective of the motivation of the perpetrators.

While acknowledging a general reduction of violence as compared to previous elections, since the beginning of the year OHCHR has observed an apparent campaign of pressure, threats, intimidation and inducements directed against political activists at every level in an attempt to persuade them to change parties. This drive has targeted influential individuals, primarily belonging to opposition parties, as well as the areas where these parties were the most influential. It is in this context of pressure to shift party allegiance that Sam Rainsy Party activist Tout Sarorn was arrested on 18 March in Kampong Thom province, on charges of illegally confining a fellow party member who was in the process of joining the Cambodian People's Party. The Office has found no evidence to support the charges against Mr Sarorn, who remains in prison awaiting trial. Three co-accused in the same case are facing arrest.

The Office also notes the public allegations of terrorist activity directed against the Sam Rainsy Party by an alleged defector from that party, and the announcement of a military investigation into those allegations. No credible evidence has been produced to support these claims. OHCHR is concerned that such actions have had a detrimental effect on the ability of political parties to organize, campaign and mobilise supporters, as well as on the readiness of voters to engage in public discussion about current political issues.

OHCHR remains concerned about deeply entrenched inequities among the political parties in their access to, and control of, both electronic and print media, and the consequent effect upon the voters' right to an informed electoral choice. The Office notes in particular the closure of the Angkor Ratha radio station in Kratie province after it sold airtime to opposition political parties, and regrets that the station was not allowed to resume broadcasting before the elections. OHCHR is further concerned by the arrest and week-long detention of opposition party candidate and *Moneaksekar Khmer* editor Dam Sith prior to the start of the electoral campaign, after the newspaper reported on a speech by opposition leader Sam Rainsy, and the ongoing threat to prosecute Mr Rainsy in relation to that speech. The charges against Dam Sith remain pending.

OHCHR encourages all political parties to contribute to a constructive post-election environment, and to resolve peacefully any complaints or differences of views, in the spirit of the Constitution and human rights principles.