1,000 Days in Prison, 
Born Samnang & Sok Sam Oeun Must Be Released

On the 1,000-day anniversary of the arrests of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun, LICADHO urges the Court of Appeal to promptly consider the two men’s case and to release them.

Today, October 23, is the 1000th day that Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun have spent in custody since their arrests on January 28, 2004 for allegedly killing prominent trade unionist Chea Vichea. They are currently serving 20-year prison sentences for the murder, despite extensive evidence of their innocence. Many individuals – including former King Norodom Sihanouk, Chea Vichea’s family and the prime witness to the murder – have declared that they are innocent.

“These two men, who no-one believes are guilty, have already lost 1,000 days of their lives locked up behind bars,” said LICADHO President Kek Galabru. “They must be set free, so they can return to their families and to their normal lives.”

Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun have appealed against their convictions but the Court of Appeal has not yet heard their case. An appeal hearing set for October 6, 2006 was cancelled at the last minute because one of the judges was sick.

“We hope that the Court of Appeal will recognize the urgency of this case and set a new hearing date as soon as possible, and that the court will carefully consider all the available evidence,” said Kek Galabru. “We believe that an impartial review of all the facts will lead to the release of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun.”

After 18-months in pre-trial detention following their arrests, Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun were convicted of Chea Vichea’s murder by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court in August 2005. The police and court actions in this case were widely criticized, from inside and outside of Cambodia, because of irregularities and a lack of credible evidence against the two men.

“This case has tarnished the reputation of the Cambodia’s justice system, and the fact that Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun have spent 1,000 days in prison is a great injustice to them,” said Kek Galabru. “But now the Court of Appeal has an opportunity to rectify this, and to deliver justice to them and their families.”

To mark the 1,000 days since their arrests, family members and supporters of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun will gather today at Wat Svay Popey at 2pm in order to pray for their quick release from prison.

For more information, please contact:  
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