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JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT
ON
THE MURDER OF HY VUTHY

LICADHO, ADHOC & CCHR condemn the assassination of Hy Vuthy, President of the Free Trade Union of Workers in the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) at the Suntex garment factory, and demand a proper investigation by the authorities to bring his killers to justice.

Hy Vuthy, aged 34, was shot dead at 5.15am on February 24 while riding his motorbike home after finishing his nightshift at the Suntex factory in Phnom Penh’s Dangkao district. The murder, which took place a kilometer from the factory, was reportedly committed by two men on a motorbike.

Hy Vuthy had been President of FTUWKC members at the factory for less than a year. He had previously been a member of the Cambodian Union Federation (CUF), a rival union widely considered to be close to the government. According to preliminary investigations by LICADHO, ADHOC and CCHR, Vuthy had received telephone death threats approximately three months ago.

He was the third FTUWKC official to be assassinated in three years. Chea Vichea, the union’s President, was shot dead in January 2004 by two assassins driving a motorbike. In May 2004 Ros Sovannarith, the FTUWKC President at the Trinunggal Komara factory, was similarly murdered by two men on a motorbike.

In addition, Hy Vuthy’s murder comes after at least five violent attacks against FTUWKC officials at Suntex and the neighboring Bright Sky factory, which are both owned by the same proprietor, in 2006. They include an attack on the union’s vice-president at Suntex, Chey Rithy, while he was riding home from work in May. In September, Choy Chin, the union secretary-general at Suntex, was beaten on the head by two men armed with a metal pipe.

Furthermore, a workers’ strike at Bright Sky factory in October was violently broken up by police, during which one worker was shot in the stomach and an FTUWKC activist was punched in the face.

“There is a disturbing pattern of assassinations and physical assaults against FTUWKC representatives in general, and in particular against those at Suntex and Bright Sky factories,” said Kek Galabru, President of LICADHO. “We believe this is an orchestrated campaign of violence, intended to crush this union and frighten its members.”
“The authorities must quickly and professionally investigate Hy Vuthy’s murder, and all the previous acts of violence against the FTUWKC, to put an end to this shameless violence,” said Thun Saray, President of ADHOC. “We demand that the real perpetrators – not fake ones like the two men blamed for Chea Vichea’s murder – be brought to justice.”

“The murder of Hy Vuthy again highlights the fragile situation for trade unions and workers’ rights,” said Kem Sokha, President of CCHR. “As long as people like Chea Vichea, Ros Sovannarith and Hy Vuthy are murdered, no one can pretend that freedom of expression and freedom of association are respected in Cambodia.”

LICADHO, ADHOC CCHR would also like to express its condolences to Hy Vuthy’s family. He is survived by his wife and two children, a 4-year-old son and 5-month-old daughter.

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