UNLAWFUL DETENTION & ALLEGED TORTURE BY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
March 11, 2008

The Cambodian League for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (LICADHO) is gravely concerned by the unlawful detention and alleged torture of a man in the custody of the Ministry of Interior.

Mr Priep Pov, a Damnak Chang’aeur district policeman from Kep Municipality, was arrested without court warrant in Kep on February 18. Transferred to Phnom Penh on the same day, he has since been detained for three weeks at a compound used by the Ministry of Interior’s Order Police and the Intervention Police units. He has been beaten and kept shackled with handcuffs by foot and hand for at least some of that time, and is in poor health, according to credible information received by LICADHO.

The policeman is reportedly involved in a land dispute with Princess Marie Ranariddh, over land he and his family are currently living on in Kep.

Several senior Ministry of Interior officials have stated that the policeman is being detained on the direct orders of National Police chief General Hok Lundy. They all have repeatedly refused to allow NGO doctors or human rights investigators to meet him in detention, saying that this is contrary to the orders of Hok Lundy.

Officials have stated that Priep Pov is being held for "disciplinary re-education" for disobeying orders of his superiors in regard to the land dispute. LICADHO is aware of no legal basis which permits the Ministry of Interior to indefinitely detain, or handcuff or otherwise mistreat, a policeman as a form of discipline. Under the 1995 Ministry of Interior Circular on Discipline of the National Police Force, police officers who disobey orders can be warned or reprimanded, demoted or expelled from the police.

Under Cambodia's Criminal Procedure Law, criminal suspects arrested by the police can be detained for a maximum of 48 hours without the approval of a court prosecutor.

Officials have made it clear that Priep Pov could be released if he signs a document giving up his family’s claim to the land in Kep. As such, he has effectively been held hostage as a way of attempting to coerce his family to leave the land.

LICADHO emphasizes that all land disputes should be resolved by proper and independent investigation by the judiciary and other State bodies according to the law. In this case, regardless of who should be considered the legal owner of the land, a completely unlawful process of arbitrary arrest and detention has been used.

We strongly urge the immediate release of Priep Pov from Ministry of Interior custody, because he has been detained unlawfully. If he is not released immediately, at a minimum the Ministry of Interior should grant NGO doctors immediate access to him to ensure he can receive adequate medical care.

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