

NEWS STATEMENT

BY

LEGAL AID OF CAMBODIA

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Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC) protests Army General Chhun Tong Heng reassigning 7 soldiers in order to remove them from leading a community that opposes eviction by the general.

The 7 are from among 112 families who are LAC clients who have been ordered evicted by the general so that the 103 hectares of land they live on in Kompong Speu Province can be turned over to other generals for their own private sale or development.

In November and December 1998, General Chhun issued eviction orders. In meetings with LAC he stated that the land is to be divided among various generals for their own private use.

The 7 soldiers have obeyed the reassignment order.

Soldiers and their families were settled by their commanders on this land in the early 1990's as part of an effort to eliminate Khmer Rouge operating in the area. The soldiers demned the land, built homes and established small farms.

Now that the Khmer Rouge are finished, various generals want the land for their own personal profit because it lays along the road between Phnom Penh and Kompong Som and has become valuable.

The 7 are Sim Chhean, Keo Rotha, Kat Bun Sur, Chack Sopha, Sat Sarocum, Teng Sam Art, and Som Keat Heng. General Chhun signed orders on 10 March reassigning them from their posts in Kompong Speu to his office in Phnom Penh, pending further reassignment elsewhere. One of the 7 reassignment orders is attached to this statement.

In January, based on what LAC considered reliable information, we believed that five of these 7 men were being considered for arrest because of their leading the opposition to eviction. So far there have been no arrests.

The families subject to the eviction order demonstrated in Phnom Penh in December 1998, made a written request to the Council of Ministers at that time, and have filed suit in Kompong Speu Provincial Court.

Mrs. Yim Simene is the LAC attorney handling the case. She has stated that three times the judge handling the case issued subpoenas to generals to appear before him and explain their side of the