
cc:Mail for: Phnom Penh Post

Subject: HRW Condemns Violence in Cambodia
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH CONDEMNS VIOLENCE
AND POLICE CRACKDOWN AGAINST DEMONSTRATORS IN CAMBODIA

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New York, September 9 -- Human Rights Watch today called on the international community to denounce the outbreak of violence on the part of Cambodian government forces against peaceful demonstrators, in which at least one person was killed. The organization also condemned mob killings of at least four ethnic Vietnamese, as well as the forced dispersal by security officials of peaceful demonstrations in Phnom Penh. The rights organization urged all parties and factions to act peacefully, to refrain from violence and to exercise restraint, while respecting fundamental rights to peaceful assembly, expression, and association.

"The human rights situation is rapidly deteriorating. The international community has to take a stand on this," said Mike Jendrzejczyk, Washington director of the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch. "Arrests of opposition leaders on spurious grounds must not be tolerated. At the same time, all

parties in Cambodia must avoid fueling ethnic violence through their public statements."

The rights organization praised the actions of King Sihanouk, who has issued appeals for calm and non-violence and attempted to bring the different factions together to break a post-election stalemate that is blocking creation of a new government.

Since late August, opposition supporters have been protesting the results of national elections held on July 26, in which the Cambodian People's Party of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen was declared the winner.

Incidents that have occurred during the last two weeks in Phnom Penh include:

--On September 8, security officials forcibly dispersed demonstrations at several sites around Phnom Penh, severely beating several people and wounding dozens of others. At "Democracy Square", where opposition supporters had set up a tent city on August 30 to protest alleged election fraud and call for Hun Sen to step down, police in riot gear, soldiers with batons and AK47s, and military police used water cannons and fired warning shots to get the demonstration to break up. A bulldozer then plowed through the blue plastic tents that demonstrators had erected over the previous ten days, tearing down hand-written signs calling for an end to tyranny and injustice.

--On September 7, police killed at least one man and wounded several other people, including a monk, when they attempted to break up a protest by beating people with their guns and then opening fire three times on a crowd of several hundred demonstrators that had gathered at the Cambodiana Hotel. Opposition politician Sam Rainsy had sought refuge at the hotel earlier in the day after Hun Sen announced Rainsy would be arrested in relation to an attack on the Second Prime Minister's house.

--Also on September 7, three grenades were thrown at the Phnom Penh residence of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, who blamed the attack on Sam Rainsy. No evidence supporting this allegation has yet been produced. No one was injured in that attack.

--On September 3 and 4, at least four ethnic Vietnamese were killed in mob violence in Phnom Penh. The violence took place in the context of inflammatory anti-Vietnamese rhetoric used by the opposition parties throughout the campaign period.

-- On August 20, a driver for Kyodo News Service was killed in a drive-by shooting and grenade attack in front of the compound housing the National Election Commission, where Sam Rainsy was staging an evening "sleep-in" to protest alleged election fraud.

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