

ក្រុមការងារដើម្បីកាត់បន្ថយអាវុធនៅកម្ពុជា

WORKING GROUP FOR WEAPONS REDUCTION IN CAMBODIA

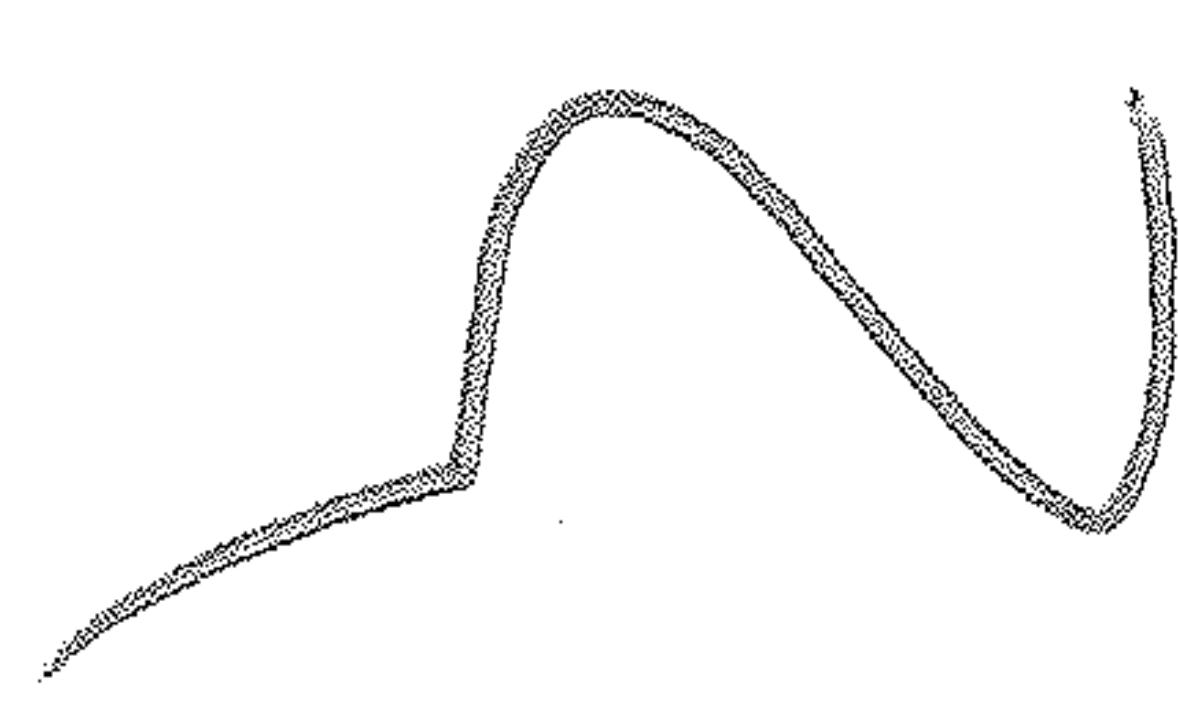
May 6th, 1999

STATEMENT

In reference to recent initiatives of the Royal Government of Cambodia, we are very pleased to know that the Government is tackling the issue of disarmament as an urgent and important matter. This is crucial for security, for peace, and to move towards a society that is ruled by law, rather than from the barrel of the gun.

Disarmament efforts have been undertaken in many parts of the world. From those efforts, the following lessons have been learned. We would strongly recommend the Government take these recommendations into account as they design and implement their disarmament program:

1. There must be clear and widespread public information about how the Government is implementing this disarmament program, and about people's Constitutional rights in relationship to search and seizure.
2. The Government's decision to rescind all current weapons registrations is excellent. However, there should be continued opportunity, for a designated period of time, for people to voluntarily surrender their guns without being liable to prosecution.
3. Weapons which are collected must be publicly and immediately destroyed. This is important to demonstrate that weapons collection will result in improved security for citizens, as well as to ensure that the weapons collected are never used anywhere again. This could be done, for example, by burning weapons in the pagodas as a symbolic effort of putting out the fires of war, or by transforming all weapons into public statues.
4. We affirm the government's decision not to conduct door to door searches for weapons. It is unconstitutional, would create fear in the public, cause people to hide their weapons, provide opportunities for abuse by the searchers, and create dangerous situations in cases when weapons were found. Therefore, we do not support a general program of house searches. Any house searches should be conducted only with a search warrant issued by a court in accordance with the law and based on specific and substantially incriminating evidence on a case by case basis. Any searches conducted must be done in a politically neutral fashion.
5. Anyone seen carrying a gun in plain view in public could be stopped and the weapon confiscated. Weapons could also be confiscated in cases when people are arrested for other infractions of the law and then searched for weapons. However, searching persons for concealed weapons without cause is unconstitutional.
6. Off-duty soldiers and policemen, like all other citizens, should not be allowed to carry weapons in public. If they are seen in public carrying a weapon, it should be confiscated. The weapons of the Government's armed forces must be locked up in the garrison or an approved government location.



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7. It is essential to clamp down on the illegal trade of weapons. To that end, the Government should immediately and totally close weapons markets, such as the one at Tik Thlaa.
8. There should be an inventory of current Government stocks of weapons. These should be monitored by neutral observers to assure that no weapons in current stock improperly disappear.
9. We support legislation that supercedes Sub-Decree 62/95, that allows some citizens (such as higher level government officials) to legally have guns. We support that most civilians, including bodyguards or private security forces, not be allowed to possess guns.

To be effective, any solution to the problem of weapons in Cambodia must be comprehensive in scope and integrate programs at all levels: community, national, regional, and international. Therefore, coordinated action by citizens, communities, national government, NGOs, and global bodies are imperative for successfully addressing the issue.

This statement supported by Cambodian and International NGOs as below:

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
 Australian Catholic Relief (ACR)
 Cambodia Bar Association (CBA)
 Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
 Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
 Church World Service (CWS)
 Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR)
 Dhammayietra Center for Peace and Nonviolence (DMY)
 Khmer Kampuchea Krom Human Rights Development Association (KKKHRDA)
 Khmer Student Association (KSA)
 Khmer Women's Voice Centre (KWVC)
 Khmer Youth Association (KYA)
 MEDICAM
 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)
 NGO Forum on Cambodia
 Nonviolence International SE Asia, Thailand
 OXFAM Great Britain (OXFAM GB)
 Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV)
 SILAKA
 Star Kampuchea (SK)
 Women's Media Center of Cambodia (WMC)
 Youth Resources Development Program (YRDP)

This statement was prepared by the Working Group for Weapons Reduction in Cambodia. WGWR is a coalition of concerned Cambodian and international organizations and individuals cooperating to:

- Transform the desire to own and use weapons into commitment and skills for nonviolent problem solving.
- Reduce the numbers of small arms and light weapons.
- Work so that all weapons removed from society are destroyed so that they are never used anywhere again
- Promote the proper control of weapons which do exist.

We envision Cambodia as a place of justice and security where neither weapons nor violent means are used to solve problems and where people at all levels of society enjoy peace within themselves and in their communities.

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