

**COMFREL - NICFEC**  
**Joint Statement of Concerns over the Political Violence**  
**in Advance of the Forthcoming National Assembly Elections**

*Phnom Penh, September 23, 2002*

The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) and Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC) are deeply concerned that political violence may be contributing to an environment of fear in advance of the National Assembly Elections scheduled for July 27, 2003 and particularly effecting freedom of people to participate in political affairs.

Between February 12 and September 06, 2002, the Human Rights Association (ADHOC) reported four killings that may have been politically motivated, and twenty-seven cases of threats and intimidation of parties' activists. (Detail reports is referred to ADHOC)

The most recent case that may be related to the 2003 National Assembly Elections, is the killing of Mr. HENG Seang, 45, a Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) activist. COMFREL investigated the incident and determined that Mr. HENG Sean had been shot twice by three unknown gunmen wearing military uniforms at his house in Suong Lech village, Suong commune, Tbuong Khmum district, Kampong Cham province at 02:15 am on Friday, September 06, 2002. This was not a robbery because the perpetrators shot him and then escaped without taking anything, said human rights workers.

Mr. HENG Seang was a small businessman and had previously worked as an informal contact person for ADHOC and for COMFREL as a volunteer commune observer during the 2002 commune council elections and he was a popular person in the village. According to sources from witnesses, SRP party representative and COMFREL's network, about fifteen days prior to the murder he had been informally appointed as an activist by the district SRP council. It is to be noted that some political parties start to activate its network for supporting campaign for the 2003 National Assembly Elections.

At the same time, COMFREL and NICFEC note that high levels of political violence have been occurred at the same districts, provinces as the previous elections and that in each case the perpetrators escaped without punishment. For example, in Tbuong Khmum district, Kampong Cham province, there were several cases of intimidation and three (3) cases of killings (two Funcinpec's commune candidates and one SRP's activist) during the past commune council elections, according to reports of Human Rights Organizations.

COMFREL and NICFEC emphasize that the above case is shown a politically motivated killing. The death of Mr. HEANG Seang effects the security of the victim family's lives, his wife and four children.

COMFREL and NICFEC strongly condemn this crucial act and call upon the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and competent institutions at all levels to conduct an urgent investigation and take effective measures to prevent violations of political rights as well as killing of party activists including efforts to identify the perpetrators, arrest and bring them to court. And the RGC should review the responsibilities of the local authorities and armed forces there

Further measures are also necessary to bring an end to threats of political parties activists and fear of people in participating in the political affairs. COMFREL and NICFEC insist on legal actions as following:

- Disseminate and broadcast of public appeals and other announcements to prevent political violence, threats and intimidation.
- Continue the ongoing effort for weapons reduction and destruction of privately or illegally owned small arms.

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