



STATEMENT BY MR JULIO A. JELDRES

Melbourne [Australia] 5 December 1996

Upon my return to Melbourne from a trip to the People's Republic of China, my attention has been drawn to statements made by Mr Sieng Sothearak, an avowed former Khmer Rouge, member of an urban terrorist squad operating in Phnom Penh. According to the press reports I have seen, these "urban rebels" implicated H.E. Mr Sam Rainsy, President of the Nation Party, of funding his party with US 2 million given to him by the Khmers Rouges.

The "urban rebels" also made a number of allegations against HRH Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh, First Prime Minister of Cambodia, and the FUNCINPEC party.

I do not wish to enter Cambodia's domestic political arena but I feel that I ought to make public now, before political mileage is made of it, some contacts I had with Mr Sieng Sothearak, one of the spokesmen of these so-called "urban rebels" back in 1994 while I was Executive Director of the Khmer Institute of Democracy [KID].

Immediately after the assassination of the Editor of Samleng Youveachon Khmer [Voice of Khmer Youth] in early September 1994, I was visited by Mr Sieng Sothearak [also known as Reach Chudee Konakor], who introduced himself to me as Mr Seang Dy. He was accompanied by another young man and they both introduced themselves as journalists of Samleng Youveachon Khmer. They requested that KID organized journalism, democracy and human rights training for them. I told them that I would have to request permission from one of the donor countries to divert already allocated funds to such activity and that if KID was able to organize the training it would also invite other Cambodian newspapers to participate.

I was eventually authorized by the Royal Norwegian government to use some of their funding for these activities and training took place for journalists from Samleng Youveachon Khmer and other small newspapers at KID in early October 1994. The training was done free of charge by foreign journalists working in Phnom Penh for REUTERS, the Phnom Penh Post and the Bangkok Post.

At the end of the training, KID presented brand new desks, filing cabinets, tape recorders and audio cassettes to all the newspapers. Mr Sieng Sothearak accepted, on behalf of Samleng Youveachon Khmer, 4 desks, 3 filing cabinets, 2 tape-recorders and 10 audio cassettes. But a mistake was made and he ended up taking 6 desks, 2 of which belonged to other newspaper. When KID staff realised what had

happened, at my request, they visited the acting editor of Samleng Youveachon Khmer and asked that the 2 desks be returned to us. Mr Chan Rattana, the acting editor, did not know anything about the donation and upon making enquiries found out that most of the brand new furniture and equipment had been re-sold by Mr Sieng Sothearak to a merchant at Phnom Penh's Central Market. KID alerted the police and we were able to recuperate all the goods stolen by Mr. Sieng Sothearak [alias Mr Seang Dy, alias Mr Reach Chudee Konakor].

Given Mr Sieng Sothearak's reputation as a thief and a liar, I believe people should be extremely careful in accepting his obviously politically motivated allegations against H.E. Sam Rainsy and HRH Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh, First Prime Minister of Cambodia.



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