

# HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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1485 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017-6104 TEL (212) 972-8400 FAX (212) 972-0905 E-mail: hrwatchnyc@igc.apc.org

1522 K St., NW, #910, Washington, DC 20005-1202 TEL (202) 371-6592 FAX (202) 371-0124 E-mail: hrwatchdc@igc.apc.org

10951 West Pico Blvd., #203, Los Angeles, CA 90064-2126 TEL (310) 475-3070 FAX (310) 475-5612 E-mail: hrwatchla@igc.apc.org

33 Islington High St., N1 9LH London, UK TEL (4471) 713-1995 FAX (4471) 713-1800 E-mail: hrwatchuk@gn.apc.org

15 Rue Van Campenhout, 1040 Brussels, Belgium TEL (322) 732-2009 FAX (322) 732-0471 E-mail: hrwatcheu@gn.apc.org

KENNETH ROTH

Executive Director

CYNTHIA BROWN

Program Director

HOLLY J. BURKHALTER

Advocacy Director

GARA LaMARCHE

Associate Director

JUAN E. MÉNDEZ

General Council

OSNOS

Communications Director

DERRICK WONG

Finance & Administration

Director

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For Further Information:

Dinah PoKempner, Washington, D.C. 202 371-6592 (office)

202 332-8537 (home)

Sidney Jones, New York

212 972-8400 (office)

718 398-4186 (home)

Stephen Goose, Washington, D.C.

202 371-6592 (office)

703 373-3360 (home)

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

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## INTERNATIONAL DONORS URGED TO PRESS CAMBODIA ON HUMAN RIGHTS

A new report on the deteriorating human rights situation in Cambodia, released on the eve of the meeting in Paris of the country's major aid donors, accused both the Cambodian government and the Khmer Rouge of severe abuses, and calls for an end to any further provision of arms or military equipment to the warring parties. The 100-page report by Human Rights Watch, *Cambodia at War*, also calls on international donors and international financial institutions represented at the International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia (ICORC), who are considering further budgetary support and assistance for the Cambodian government to insist that the government hold its officials, civilian and military, accountable for violations of human rights.

As documented in the report, the months leading up to the donors' conference have witnessed some of the worst abuses since the end of the U.N. peacekeeping mission.

The Khmer Rouge have adopted "scorched earth" tactics, including the deliberate slaughter of noncombatants, the razing of whole villages, the burning of rice fields, and the abduction of thousands of civilians for forced labor and ransom. Diplomatically isolated and threatened by defections, the guerrillas have added to their history of presiding over the deaths of one million Cambodians fresh abuses, including kidnapping and murdering Westerners and instigating more racially motivated massacres of ethnic Vietnamese.

The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces have also violated humanitarian and human rights law through gross abuses against civilians, including murder, abduction, extortion,

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Human Rights Watch is a not-for-profit corporation monitoring and promoting human rights in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and among signatories of the Helsinki accords

pillage, and the operation of secret detention centers where torture and executions have taken place. The Royal Government has been slow to rectify these abuses and hold perpetrators accountable, instead turning on journalists and newspapers, both domestic and foreign, with a frenzy of lawsuits and administrative sanctions in the weeks leading up to the ICORC meeting. Dissident politicians and human rights workers have also received threats on their lives. A new law that punishes members of the Khmer Rouge has already resulted in unjustifiable arrests and trials that fall short of even minimum standards of fairness.

As the war continues, fresh landmines are planted daily in Cambodia, which already has the highest proportion of landmines and amputees of any country on earth. Casualty statistics for the dry season have increased exponentially since the peacekeeping period, reflecting the intensifying hostilities and the massive displacements of hundreds of thousands of the poorest Cambodians over the last year. Yet Cambodia Mine Action Center (CMAC), the major demining institution in Cambodia, lacks funds to carry its operations through the next year because of weak support from international donors.

Human Rights Watch closely examines the role played by foreign patrons of the warring sides and calls for a cut-off in transfers of arms and military equipment in each case. After the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, Thailand provided the Khmer Rouge with weapons and logistical aid, including allowing the guerrillas to carry out attacks and maneuvers from its territory. While the Thai government has come under international pressure to halt this direct military aid, it continues indirectly to finance the Khmer Rouge through permitting the lucrative cross-border trade in gems and timber. A wide range of other nations are providing the Cambodian armed forces with weapons and military equipment, including North Korea, Poland, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Russia, Israel, Indonesia and the Seychelles; other countries are providing training to military forces, among them France, the U.S.A., Australia and Malaysia.

The report was produced jointly by Human Rights Watch's Asia and Arms Project divisions. Key recommendations include:

- An immediate end to violence against civilians by both sides, and respect for the laws of war and international human rights norms. This would entail on the part of the Khmer Rouge the end of its deliberate campaign to raze entire villages, destroy crops, and take whole communities hostage, and abandonment of starvation, rape and terrorist attacks on civilian targets as weapons of war. On the Royal Government's side, it would require the prosecution of those who commit extrajudicial executions, assaults, indiscriminate bombardment, abduction, illegal detention, extortion, pillage and other abuses.
- The prosecution in civilian courts of military authorities who commit abuses against civilians. The government must ensure the independence of judges and lawyers from political influence, and make legal representation available to all defendants.
- The end to official reprisals against the press and threats against others for the expression of opinions or reporting of true facts that reflect negatively on government bodies, official

policies, or public figures. Freedom of expression must be assured through a law that fully complies with international standards.

- Scrupulous monitoring of the implementation of Cambodia's law against the Khmer Rouge by judges, defenders and human rights advocates, who must be protected from accusation and reprisal. The full text of the law must be widely disseminated, and all arrests under its authority be made public. Persons who have been unjustifiably detained must be released without delay.
- The abolition of the use, acquisition and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines by the Cambodian parties as well as all other nations, and the financial support of demining efforts by international donors.
- A full stop to Thailand's support of the Khmer Rouge, particularly the cessation of trade which provides the guerrillas immense financial resources. A mechanism for international monitoring of support for the Khmer Rouge, whether in the form of military equipment, logistical assistance or trade, should be established.
- A guarantee that refugees who flee hostilities will not be forcibly repatriated into a situation of danger, and that international organizations will have access to monitor such refugees and to supervise any voluntary repatriation.
- No further provision of arms or military equipment to the warring Cambodian parties by any nation, in view of the disproportionate suffering of civilians at the hands of each military force.
- The inclusion of training in human rights and humanitarian law as a key component of any effort to assist the Cambodian government with reform of its military.

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#### ***Human Rights Watch/Asia (formerly Asia Watch)***

*Human Rights Watch is a nongovernmental organization established in 1978 to monitor and promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East and among the signatories of the Helsinki accords. Kenneth Roth is the executive director; Cynthia Brown is the program director; Holly J. Burkhalter is the advocacy director; Gara LaMarche is the associate director; Juan E. Mendez is general counsel; and Susan Osnos is the communications director. Robert L. Bernstein is the chair of the executive committee and Adrian W. DeWind is vice chair. Its Asia division was established in 1985 to monitor and promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights in Asia. Sidney Jones is the executive director; Mike Jendrzeczyk is the Washington director; Robin Munro is the Hong Kong director; Zunetta Liddell, Dinah PoKempner, Patricia Gossman and Jeannine Guthrie are research associates; Mark Girouard and Shu-Ju Ada Cheng are Luce fellows; Diana Cheng and Jennifer Hyman are associates; Mickey Spiegel is a research consultant.*

#### ***Human Rights Watch Arms Project***

*The Arms Project was established in 1992 to monitor and prevent arms transfers to governments or organizations grossly violating internationally recognized human rights and the laws of war and promote freedom of information regarding arms transfers worldwide. Joost R. Hiltermann is the director, Stephen D. Goose is the program director; Kathleen A. Bleakley is the research assistant.*