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CAMBODIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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PRESS STATEMENT

CCHR accuses the Sihanoukville Authorities of obstructing its work for villagers affected by land conflict

Phnom Penh, April 25, 2007

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) is upset by the accusation of Sihanoukville's Authorities that staffs of the NGO have incited inhabitants of village 6 in Mittapheap district to violent acts against the police in a recent conflict over the land they are living on.

This is another attempt to silence and obstruct the activities of human rights organizations to assist poor people in defending their rights. The organization is monitoring this land conflict since September 2006 when police bulldozed the houses of families in that community and injured one person by a gunshot. CCHR advised the members of the community to organize themselves in order to defend their legitimate claims by peaceful means. According to CCHR's investigation, a large number of families have lived on the disputed 20 hectare-land since 1985. Under the Cambodian Land Law in 2001, they are therefore entitled to receive legal documents. Recently, the authority acknowledged their residency by issuing them the identity card for the commune council election.

CCHR; therefore, calls upon the authority to recognize the claims of the villagers instead of promoting and protecting the intransparent sale of land to a rich person. CCHR deplores the fact that some desperate people resolve to means that are not peaceful and to which the center never encourage them to do so.

For more information and interviews please contact Ou Virak, CCHR's Advocacy Director, phone no. 012-404051