



**ប្រជុំមណ្ឌលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា**  
**CAMBODIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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**PRESS STATEMENT**


**CCHR and its radio Voice of Democracy protest against the criminal  
defamation complaint against its investigator in Battambang province**

*Phnom Penh, October 19, 2006*

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) is very concerned about the criminal defamation complaint under Article 63 UNTAC law against its staff member Mr. In Kong Chit, investigator of the organization's provincial office in Battambang. The complaint was filed by Mr. Seak Ratanak, the Director of Pailin Hospital. In Kong Chit is summoned to Battambang Provincial Court by the prosecutor Mr. Heung Bunchea on October 24. In Kong Chit had reported about complaints by several medical doctors of the hospital, including the deputy director Dr. Khe Sokhom, about the financial management of the hospital. In particular, the doctors had accused Mr. Seak Ratanak of having withheld considerable sums paid by patients for treatment. The doctors had called on the Ministry of Health to remove Mr. Seak Ratanak from his position and threatened to lay down their jobs. A feature on the case was broadcasted by CCHR's radio program Voice of Democracy (VOD) on August 6, 2006.

CCHR holds that its employee In Kong Chit correctly performed his duty as a provincial investigator/reporter of the NGO. The VOD report that was produced on the basis of In Kong Chit's report fulfilled the standards of both human rights investigation and journalism. The radio feature was balanced by giving the hospital director an opportunity to respond to the accusation. Pa Nguon Teang, VOD director, said: "Reporting on abuses in public services like the health system is an important function of both a human rights organization and independent media. Radio Voice of Democracy as a whole and I as the chief executive of the program take the full responsibility for the reporting on this case. At the same time we express our deep concern that the criminal law on defamation becomes excessively used by public servants who are confronted with criticism. In this respect, low level functionaries seem to learn from high ranking government officials who used and are using Article 63 UNTAC law and Article 62 on criminal disinformation against journalists and human rights workers."

Pa Nguon Teang was amongst the five Cambodian human rights activists that were arrested between October 2005 and January 2006 on the basis of criminal defamation complaints filed by Prime Minister Hun Sen.

  
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