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CAMBODIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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PRESS STATEMENT

The attempt of the Phnom Penh City Hall to obstruct the public launch of the Black Box Campaign against Corruption failed - CCHR protests against violation of Freedom of Expression

Phnom Penh, September 5, 2006

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) strongly protests against the attempt of the Phnom Penh City Hall to hinder the public advertising for the Black Box Campaign against Corruption in Cambodia. The small truck that was supposed to parade one of the huge black boxes (1m x 1m x 1.2m) through the streets of Phnom Penh on Monday morning was stopped at 9:00 a.m. by police after having left the CCHR premises in Khan Toul Kork. The black box for collecting evidence on corruption cases and the vehicle with loudspeakers and banners were seized and brought to the police station. They were only returned at 4:30 p.m. after the end of the launch ceremony which was attended by representatives of the international community and the Cambodian civil society. Despite continuous protests of CCHR, the hired truck driver was detained for the same time.

"None of the reasons given by the authorities for stopping the vehicle and for temporarily confiscating one of our black boxes was legally founded. Cinemas do advertise new movies in the very same way without notifying the authorities of each district their trucks will pass. This was an obvious attempt by the Phnom Penh City Hall to obstruct the launch of our campaign which aims at revealing corruption of Cambodian officials. And it is just another example how the fundamental civil right to freedom of expression is violated in our country. But we will continue our campaign by collecting from the people evidence about corruption and we will make serious cases public. For the time being there is no independent and effective agency of the government for the investigation of that kind of crimes", stated CCHR President Kem Sokha.

For questions and interviews please contact the coordinator of the Black Box Campaign, Mr. Ou Virak, phone 012-404051. A fact sheet and an update on the events during the launch of the campaign can be ordered via phone or e-mail virak_ou@yahoo.com