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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

CCHR Media Comment, Phnom Penh, 23 June 2011

Media Comment: CCHR offers condolences to the family of acid attack victim In Soklda and calls for a holistic approach to acid violence

Acid attack victim Ya Sokhnim, the aunt of a prominent beauty queen In Soklyda, died in Phnom Penh yesterday (22 June 2011) of injuries resulting from a 2008 crime masterminded by her niece's former lover Chea Ratha. On 8 May 2008, two men on a motorcycle accosted Ya Sokhnim in the capital and poured acid over her face and upper body. She suffered severe burns as a result, losing her right eye and her breast. In 2009 the Appeal Court found that Chea Ratha, a former deputy chief of staff of the military police and In Soklyda's lover, had ordered the attack after In Soklyda fled a forced relationship. Four of the suspects including Chea Ratha remain at large and are thought to have fled Cambodia.

Commenting on the Ya Sokhnim case John Coughlan, Senior Legal Consultant at the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights throughout Cambodia, said:

"I am both shocked and saddened to hear that Ya Sokhnim has succumbed to her injuries as a result of this horrific attack. My thoughts and condolences are with her family during this extremely difficult time. This wretched case reminds us of the need for a holistic approach to acid violence which goes beyond having a robust acid law, which hopefully the forthcoming law will be. The Royal Government of Cambodia needs to ensure that enforcement is effective which includes the putting in place of bilateral extradition arrangements that hold perpetrators to account for their crimes, irrespective of whether they have absconded or not. The likes of Chea Ratha should not be able to evade the justice that the victims deserve and that sadly Ya Sokhnim has now been deprived."

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