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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

CCHR Media Comment, Phnom Penh, 29 December 2011

CCHR condemns Royal Pardon and premature release of convicted pedophiles

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) condemns the premature release from prison of three convicted pedophiles. On 27 December, 2011, it was reported in the *Phnom Penh Post* (“Anger over pedophile pardons”), that in addition to the pardon and release of Russian Alexander Trofimov and German Alexander Watrin, a third pedophile, Dutch national Rene Paul Martin Aubel, sentenced to 10 years for sex crimes against six boys in 2005, was released from prison on 23 December, 2011 after receiving a royal pardon. Watrin was convicted of sex crimes against four boys under the age of 15 and was released early after serving only seven years of his 10-year sentence. On 20 December 2011, Russian business tycoon and former chair of Kos Pos Investment Company - which in 2006 received permission to build a \$300 million resort on Kos Pos of Sihanoukville - Alexander Trofimov was granted a royal pardon and released from prison. Trofimov had served just over four years of an eight-year sentence – which had previously been 17 years but was reduced by the Court of Appeal last year - for sex crimes against 17 underage girls. The Royal Palace has specifically distanced itself from Trofimov’s pardon – who is also wanted in Russia over allegations that he raped girls as young as nine there – stating that the request had come from the Ministry of Justice. Interior ministry officials have also stated that they were surprised to see his name on the list of those pardoned as the ministry had made no such request, alleging that the name had been inserted after the list was forwarded to the Ministry of Justice.

In response to the Royal Pardons CCHR President Ou Virak stated:

“The Royal Pardons for sex crimes sets a worrying and dangerous precedent for the integrity of the Cambodian criminal justice system and the safety of Cambodian children. Cambodia has strong, robust laws to tackle sex crimes in the form of the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and the Penal Code, which are aimed at punishing perpetrators and protecting the rights and dignity of human beings, particularly children. However, these laws will only be effective when the sanctity of the rule of law, in this case the original conviction, is respected. Without this, not only does the conviction fail to punish the crime, protect the public, and reinforce the rule of law, it fails to act as a necessary deterrent. The Royal Pardons and release of these three pedophiles represent a blatant disregard for the sanctity of the rule of law and has shown yet again how political pressure can trump the rights of those most vulnerable and marginalized.”

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