The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) deplores the brutal acid attack in Kampong Cham province on Friday that took the life of Sim Yi, 42, and which has left a 19 year old woman, Srei Leak, with horrific injuries. In today’s Phnom Penh Post (“Acid attack claims man’s life: Case will test provisions of new law”) it was reported that 50 per cent of Sim Yi’s body had been badly burned and that he died hours after the attack. The main suspect of the attack is believed to be his wife, Chheng Mao, who allegedly fled the scene after the attack and remains at large.

The attack against Sim Yi and Srei Leak is the second acid attack of 2012, the first having occurred on 31 January in Russei Keo district, Phnom Penh, when Ms. Rith Savan, 23, was doused with acid by another woman. The attack was the first attack after the passing of a new acid law aimed at controlling all aspects of acid that cause harm to “the health and life of persons”, including by better controlling access to acid and providing for more stringent punishments for those who use acid in attacks. To date, no suspects have been arrested or charged in relation to this attack, though it is reported that the police do have a suspect in mind.

Responding to the latest attack and the ongoing failure by authorities to apprehend those allegedly responsible for the commission of these heinous crimes, Ms. Ramana Sorn, CCHR Project Coordinator for its Ending Acid Violence Project, stated:

“The death of Sim Yi and the injuries sustained by Srei Leak in last Friday’s attack is a tragic example of the continued prevalence of this horrific phenomenon that afflicts Cambodia. While a comprehensive law designed to address the problem of acid violence is in existence, lessons learned in other jurisdictions show that such laws will only have minimal effects if they are not accompanied by proper enforcement and implementation. The culture of impunity that surrounds acid crimes in Cambodia will continue to subsist – and potentially encourage offenders to believe that they can avoid criminal repercussions for their actions – if perpetrators continue to escape prosecution. The authorities and the courts must ensure due and thorough investigations into these two attacks to bring the perpetrators to justice and to send a message to others that this abhorrent form of violence will be punished with the full force of the law.”

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