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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

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Dr Surapong Tovichakchaikul
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sri Ayudhya Road
Bangkok 10400
Thailand

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Racial and religious profiling of Cambodian Muslims by Thai enforcement agencies would be a serious breach of their human rights, would exacerbate political tensions, and must be resisted

Your Excellency,

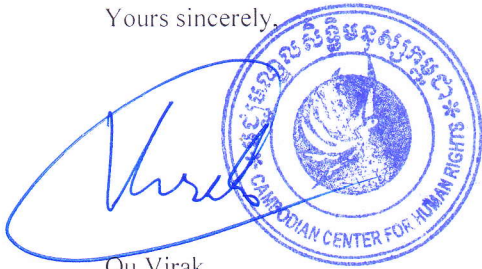
I write to you in response to the accusation by General Prayuth Chan-ocha, chief of the Thai army, that some Cambodian Muslims have joined the violent insurgency in the deep south of Thailand and that they are providing indirect financial support to the insurgent networks. The implication is that Cambodian Muslims may soon be prevented from entering Thailand from Cambodia or will at the very least be monitored aggressively.

If scrutiny of Cambodian Muslims is indeed stepped up, such actions would constitute illegal racial and religious profiling – in breach of Articles 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the “UDHR”) and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the “ICCPR”) – which prohibit any discrimination on grounds such as race or religion. Furthermore, if Cambodian Muslims are actually prevented from traveling into Thailand – and from there on to Malaysia, where many economic migrants are headed – then their fundamental rights to freedom of movement – under Article 13 of the UDHR and Article 12 of the ICCPR – will also have been violated.

In light of the cautious progress made in connection with the border dispute – in particular around Preah Vihear temple – over recent months, this announcement represents a significant setback for Cambodian-Thai relations. I respectfully suggest that Thailand needs to solve its long-running political issues in the deep south, either by itself or with the help of its neighbors. Resorting to paranoia and knee-jerk nationalism – of a familiar sort – by pointing fingers at its neighbors will not help anyone or solve anything, and risks exacerbating political tensions between Cambodia and Thailand once again. While South-East Asia is not on the front line of Islamic tensions, events in Thailand’s deep south and Burma’s Rakhaing state indicate how complex and violent such tensions can become – and how quickly. In light of which, I call upon all governments to tackle the root causes of such tensions by ensuring political and religious freedom and equitable development for all.

More urgently, I urge you to call on the Thai army and border authorities to: (1) resist illegal racial or religious profiling of Cambodian Muslims or any other minority, (2) respect their fundamental human rights – including their inalienable rights to equality and freedom of movement – and (3) continue rebuilding the political relationship between Thailand and its friend and neighbor, Cambodia.

Yours sincerely,



Ou Virak
President of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

CC: Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia
H.E. Hor Namhong, Foreign Minister of Cambodia
Cambodian and international media
CCHR contacts and networks