



**CCHR Human Rights Defender Alert - Phnom Penh, 17 May 2018**

**Environmental activist Ven Aet was shot at in Areng Valley, but sustained no injury**

*Date of the incident:* 12 May 2018  
*Name:* Ven Aet  
*Category of Activist:* Environmental activist  
*Location:* Koh Kong Province  
*Nature of threat:* Death threat and shooting attempt

On Saturday 12 May 2018 at around 10 pm, environmental activist Ven Aet was shot at, while he was at his home in Chrok Ruessei Village, Chumnoab Commune, Thma Bang District, Koh Kong Province. Luckily, he sustained no injury. Ven Aet was at his house with a friend when one gunshot was fired at him, as he was going to the bathroom outside of his house. Since it was dark, neither him nor his friend were able to see the assailant, nor were they able to determine whether there were one or more individuals. All villagers confirmed having heard the gunshot, adding that it came from the direction of Ven Aet's house.

Ven Aet, the brother of renowned environmental activist Ven Vorn, is actively involved in the protection of human rights and of the environment in Areng Valley, Koh Kong Province. Back in 2013, he successfully advocated against the construction of a Dam in Areng Valley, and is now actively involved in patrolling the forest in order to fight illegal timber trade, together with other environmental activists. Ven Aet is also supporting the Jong ethnic group in obtaining recognition as an indigenous group. Ven Aet was also a candidate for the CNRP during the 2017 commune elections, but is no longer connected with the party since its dissolution by the Supreme Court in November 2017.

On 17 April 2018, Ven Aet was reportedly told by a commune public official that he “would be killed soon”, even if he “escaped”, which he understood as being a death threat. This happened about a dozen days after he had gone to Phnom Penh with 10 community members of the Jong ethnicity, to submit a request for recognition as an indigenous group, and a week after an unknown individual insinuated that the real purpose of Ven Aet's trip to Phnom Penh was to participate in a CNRP gathering. Even though Ven Aet filed a formal complaint at the local police station following the threat he received, no action was taken as a result. Following the authorities' inaction and out of fear for his safety and that of his family, Ven Aet fled his home, together with his wife and his son. However, he had come back to his home – leaving his family in a safe place – on 8 May 2018, after he received a call from Thma Bang District commissioner in relation to the complaint he had submitted to the local police station in relation to the death threat. After a discussion between Ven Aet and the public officer who made the threat, on 9 May 2018, the latter affirmed that his statement was in fact a joke, and

that he would guarantee Ven Aet and his family's safety. Despite this assurance, the shooting at Ven Aet appears to be at best, another threat; at worst, an attempt to seriously injure or kill him.

Both the death threat and the shooting appear to be directly linked to Ven Aet's activities as an environmental and human rights activist; further, the attempted shooting constitutes a direct attempt against Ven Aet's life. Both require immediate, transparent and impartial investigations by the authorities, as well as urgent action to ensure Ven Aet's safety and that of his family.

**For more information, please contact CCHR via telephone at +855 (0) 23 726 901 or email at [info@cchrcambodia.org](mailto:info@cchrcambodia.org).**