UN Envoy Issues Sharp Rebuke of Judicial System

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A new report from the UN's top envoy on human rights that is critical of the country's judiciary could have a harmful impact on his relationship with the government, rights workers said Monday.

Prasad Subedi, the UN special rapporteur for human rights, is scheduled to present a report this month to the UN Human Rights Council sharply critical of the courts and calling for wide changes in the judicial system.

In his report, Subedi urged more tolerance of criticism by public figures and cautioned against using the courts to silence dissent.

He also urged members of the Supreme Council of Magistracy to step down from their positions within the ruling Cambodian People's Party and called for more resources to be put into the court system.
Subedi replaced Yash Ghai as the envoy to Cambodia after Ghai’s relationship with the government broke down in the wakes of similarly critical reports, which warned of political instability in the wake of human rights abuses.

“His fate may be the same as Yash Ghai’s,” said Ou Virak, president of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, echoing concerns of other groups.

However, government spokesman Phay Siphan said it was too soon to say whether the report would cause a similar rift.

He said, however, that Subedi “does not fully understand” the rights situation in Cambodia.