

NEWSLETTER
KAS
CAMBODIA OFFICE
39th EDITION
April 2013

Maria-Theresia Raaz

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The following articles are a composition of last two weeks' (15.04.2013-30.04.2013) press releases in Cambodia. They give a review on current developments in the country.

US Report Criticises Human Rights Situation in Cambodia

A new report on the human rights situation in Cambodia has been released by the US State Department. Once again, it emphasises the country's severe problems with a weak judiciary, corruption and torture in prisons. The US government announced that the human rights situation will be the most important topic to be discussed with the Cambodian government.

In terms of corruption the report determines the issue as part of every-day life in Cambodia. Unfortunately, corruption becomes more and more rooted in the society and as a result the legislative, judiciary and executive branches suffer from it, too. Transparency International ranked the country at the 157th of 174 places in 2012's Corruption Perceptions Index. The report addresses as well the proved human right's violations. Torture and the abuse of prisoners to force a confession are one of the realities. Further issues mentioned



source: Human Rights Watch¹

are domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation of children, inhuman conditions for prisoners, lack of transparency and respect for freedom of speech and assembly. Government officials rejected the accusations and evaluated the information as outdated. Officials highlighted that changing the mindset of the people is a slow process and Cambodia does not want to be accused but supported by the US to cope with those issues. After the release the findings were very much debated. Human Rights Watch Asia added that the issue of the politicisation of the administration of justice is one of the key issues. The experts examine a lack of judicial independence and the judiciary is blamed to be a "puppet" of the government. It is now supposed to be the turn of the government to tackle the mentioned issues to avoid further criticism by the Cambodian people and the international community.

Further reading:

Cambodia Supreme Court Keeps Activist Jailed

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/29/cambodia-supreme-court-keeps-activist-jailed>

US Says Court Corruption, Rights Abuses Still Rampant

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/us-says-court-corruption-rights-abuses-still-rampant-19331/>

¹http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media/images/photographs/2013_Cambodia_Yorm_Bopha_Deniedbail.jpg

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Weak Judiciary Cited in Annual US Rights Report

<http://www.voacambodia.com/content/weak-judiciary-cited-in-annual-us-rights-report/1649485.html>

Cambodians Shot to Death at Thai Border

It was reported that three Cambodians, coming from the Oddar Meanchey province, were shot to death by Thai soldiers when they tried to illegally cross the border. Apparently, those seven Cambodians were part of a group of about 50 people, who wanted to log rosewood on the Thai territory without permission. Even though there is no official statement from either the Thai or the Cambodian authorities, yet this incident could be considered to further strain the relationship between Thailand and Cambodia. The rights group Adhoc organisation already recorded eight killings of Cambodian people in the first four months of the year. All the victims were shot by Thai border soldiers while crossing the border illegally. In the previous year 45 deaths were registered due to the same reason. According to the increasing violence at the border, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) addressed an open letter to Prime Minister of Thailand, Yingluck Shinawatra, in which the investigation of the cases is demanded. Furthermore, the CCHR accuses the killings of the Cambodian people to be anything but self-defence and therefore completely arbitrary.



source: The Nation²

Further reading:

Letter to Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra Concerning The Continual Shooting to Death of Cambodian Civilians in Thai Territory And The Lack of Any Investigation

http://www.cchrcambodia.org/index_old.php?url=media/media.php&p=press_detail.php&prid=383&id=5

Three Illegal Loggers Killed in Thailand

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/three-illegal-loggers-killed-in%E2%80%88thailand-20680/>

²http://www.nationmultimedia.com/new/2013/03/12/national/images/30201802-01_big.jpg

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CNRP Wants Students to Focus on Their Studies, Not on Issuing Land Titles



source: The Phnom Penh Post³

internal war. The Prime Minister perceives the oppositional party, Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), as a serious threat to the peace within the country. Yim Sovann, member of the CNRP, replies that students need to focus on their studies and should not be involved in such a project. The party would improve and strengthen the relations with the World Bank, which is responsible to grant loans for developing countries, instead. Getting loans at the cheapest rate from the World Bank would ensure a consecutively process of issuing land title. Additionally, the budget of the Ministry of Land Management needs to be raised in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency of their work.

Last year the government deployed „volunteering“ students to issue land titles in undisputed areas. As it is stated the students receive a salary of \$ 220 per month for their work. In the run-up to this year's elections they will be recalled just before the voters go for the ballot. Prime Minister Hun Sen warned in a statement that if the CPP is not re-elected in July the students will not have the opportunity to return to their work. He stressed the importance of voting for the CPP as to prevent an outbreak of an

Further reading:

New Land Titles Not Recognised: Villagers

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013032764723/National/new-land-titles-not-recognised-villagers.html>

³<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013042265147/National/no-volunteers-no-problem-cnrp.html>

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Oppositional Party Holds Mass Protest

With regard to the upcoming elections more than 2.000 supporters of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) gathered in the Freedom Park, Phnom Penh. The participants of the peaceful protests highlighted once more the deficits of Cambodia's National Election Committee (NEC). The party's vice president Kem Sokha accused government and NEC of abusing the right of voters by the use of wrong registration lists. Previously, NGOs reported



source: The Phnom Penh Post⁴

of deletions of voter's names and the non-existence of voters on the list. Prince Thomico, who has recently joined CNRP, stressed if there are no reforms before the people go to the polls, there is no need for elections. To him, Cambodia seems to be a neo-communist regime without a democratic multiparty system at all. The CNRP announced that they will continue to demonstrate if the NEC rejects their efforts to reform the system. On this occasion the CNRP handed over a petition to San Taing

Sidoeun, a representative of NEC. The petition demands a review of the list by high-ranking officials of the committee but the Secretary-General of the NEC commented subsequently that the NEC law does not require another review of the list. The opposition approached the international community to put pressure on the government. The European Union proclaimed it will send two experts to analyse the situation and provide the EU with independent information. On the sidelines it was reported that activists from other provinces were kept from joining the demonstration when they tried to enter the city of Phnom Penh.

Further reading:

At The White House, Demonstrators Call for Cambodian Election Reform

<http://www.voacambodia.com/content/at-white-house-demonstrators-call-for-cambodian-election-reform/1648841.html>

Cambodia's Election Panel to "Consider" Opposition Demands

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/demands-04242013153620.html>

Like Father, Like Son In CPP

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013043065324/National/like-father-like-son-in-cpp-another-ruling-party-scion-to-run-in-poll.html>

⁴<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013042565236/National/party-rallies-for-fair-elections.html>

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ICJ Hearings Over Preah Vihear Temple Area, Countries To Keep Calm

In an opening ceremony for a building for the City Hall in Kampot, Prime Minister Hun Sen promoted peace with its neighbour Thailand regardless of the outcome of the interpretation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Currently, the ICJ in The Hague holds hearings about the territorial dispute over the Preah Vihear temple area. The dispute over the territory caught attention in 2008, when both countries increased rapidly the number of border soldiers in the area after Cambodia had applied at UNESCO for the status of World Heritage site for Preah Vihear. In the following, Thai and Cambodian soldiers got several times involved in bloody clashes, which led to an ongoing deterioration of the relationship between both countries. Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said after his return from the hearings that there is no dispute over the Preah Vihear temple itself but over the surrounding area. Both countries requested an interpretation of the ICJ over the verdict of 1962, which regulates the ownership of the area. The ruling of the ICJ is expected to be released in autumn this year.



source: National Geographic⁵

Further reading:

Conflict Over Preah Vihear Temple Should Be Kept Within ICJ

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Conflict-over-Preah-Vihear-should-be-kept-within-t-30204670.html>

Hun Sen Urges Thai To Keep Peace

<http://www.thecambodiaherald.com/cambodia/detail/1?page=11&token=YzMxZDU0ZjNkYWV>

Thailand, Cambodia Spar UN Court Over Preah Vihear Temple

<http://csis.org/publication/thailand-cambodia-spar-un-court-over-preah-vihear-temple>

⁵<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/files/2009/06/Preah-Vihear-picture-1.jpg>

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Tourism Sector Records Increased Number of Arrivals

Cambodia Airports reported an increased number of visitors arriving at the two main international airports, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. The number of arrivals rose more than 20 per cent in this year's first three months compared to the previous year. The data shows



source: TTR Weekly⁶

that there have been 750.355 arrivals at those two airports. In the year 2012 the data recorded 608.281 arrivals. Thereby, Siem Reap attracted 30.77 per cent more people than last year. Phnom Penh's number of arrivals increased by 13.49 per cent. According to the Ministry of Tourism, the improvement of the world economy and Cambodia's political stability led to an intensified attraction of tourists. Furthermore, the increasing number of flights of the carrier Cambodia Angkor Air and the signing of an agreement between Cambodia Airlines and foreign investors resulted in a growing trust in the country's infrastructure. It is also said that Cambodia attracts mainly tourists from the region and visitors from South Korea, China and Japan.

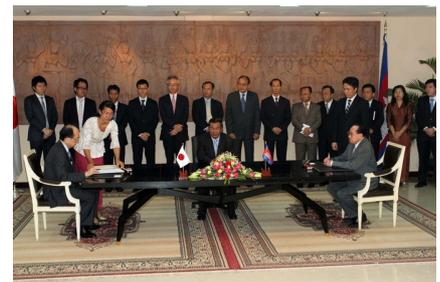
Further reading:

Cambodia Angkor Air Plans Network and Fleet Expansion

<http://centreforaviation.com/analysis/cambodia-angkor-air-plans-network-and-fleet-expansion-ahead-of-pal-backed-cambodia-airlines-launch-107675>

Cambodia Signs Off \$90-million Loan From Japan

In a ceremony Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia Yuji Kumamaru signed a loan with a volume of \$90 million. The loan will finance the expansion of National Route 5 connecting Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. The National Route 5 is considered to be part of the Southern Economic Corridor and therefore one of the most important routes to connect Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City for both tourism and trade. The project includes repair measures on a 47-km-long segment, as well as the widening of the street from two lanes to four lanes to improve the traffic flow. According to government officials, Japan is still the largest donor of loans with a total volume of \$200 billion since 1992.



source: The Cambodia Herald⁷

⁶<http://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2013/04/arrivals-to-angkor-gain-in-q1/>

⁷[http://www.thecambodiaherald.com/images/upload/cambodia/MmFjZTY4OGJkNWV/760_450/Hor%20Namhong%20\(2\).jpg](http://www.thecambodiaherald.com/images/upload/cambodia/MmFjZTY4OGJkNWV/760_450/Hor%20Namhong%20(2).jpg)