

Press Release, Friday June 17, 2005  
Working Group for Weapons Reduction

The Working Group on Weapons Reduction (WGWR) would like to express its regret at the latest hostage taking incident at the Siem Reap International School which left one child dead. This incident highlights the WGWR focus on the need to eradicate illicit small arms and light weapons in Cambodia and to tackle the increased use of small arms for robbery and other criminal activities. With the introduction of the new small arms law, it is time to put into practice a stricter mechanism to punish those who hold illegal weapons such as those used in this incident. The new law maintains strict regulation on gun ownership by civilians and provides severe punishment regarding the use of weapons with imprisonment from six months to three years and a fine of 1,000,000 Riel (250 USD) to 6,000,000 Riel (1,500 USD).

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has made progress on small arms in the past 10 years with the destruction of up to 150,000 guns in that timeframe but many guns remain and further action must occur. The Royal Government of Cambodia will have an opportunity to highlight its plans on eradicating illegal small arms and to more strictly regulate the uses of state-owned weapons at the upcoming Second UN Biennial Meeting of States on small arms, 11-15 July 2005. The WGWR research has shown that the guns that are used in criminal activities are occasionally those owned by the police, military police or the gendamerie and therefore there must be stricter mechanisms to prevent these weapons being used illegally. The new arms law punishment for those with registered guns who are careless by allowing other people to use them includes three months to three years imprisonment and a fine from 200,000 Riel (50 USD) to 1,000,000 Riel (250 USD).

The security situation in Cambodia will be improved by the new arms law by eradicating illegal small arms use in society but security must also be enhanced in local communities by better security provided by the police and RGC. The WGWR would ask the government to make an announcement of a comprehensive implementation strategy of the new law as soon as possible and to continue to work on eradicating small arms and the use of violence in Cambodia. These recommendations might prevent another situation such as the events of 16 June in Siem Reap International School.

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