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CAMBODIA: ICJ Deplores Murder of Judge

The Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today expressed its shock at the drive-by shooting yesterday of a Cambodian judge who had sentenced a top Khmer Rouge Commander last year. Judge Sok Setha Mony, 42, was shot in broad daylight by two unidentified men and died of his injuries shortly afterwards.

Last December, Judge Setha Mony sentenced former Khmer Rouge commander Sam Bith to life imprisonment for masterminding the abduction and murder of three Western tourists in 1994. Sam Bith is one of the highest-ranking Khmer Rouge officials to be tried in court. Judge Setha Mony was also expected to judge the forthcoming trial of a group of extremists allegedly responsible for attacking and looting the Thai embassy and Thai businesses during violent riots in Phnom Penh earlier this year. He also presided over the trial of a group of anti-government guerrillas, called the Cambodian Freedom Fighters, who launched an attempted coup in November 2000.

"We deplore the murder of Judge Sok Setha Mony", said Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Adviser of the CIJL/ICJ. "This attack is particularly worrisome in light of the fact that Cambodia is, after years of discussions with the international community, about to put to trial those responsible for the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. We implore the Government to respect the rule of law and bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice" she added.

The murder of Judge Setha Mony is the third case of a court official being attacked in Cambodia this month. Earlier this month, a municipal court clerk was shot dead by unidentified gunmen. Later, a prosecutor attached to a municipal court was attacked but escaped with minor injuries.

Attacks against judges severely undermine the rule of law and the administration of justice. The CIJL/ICJ implores the Government of Cambodia to bring the murderers of Judge Setha Mony to justice and to end all forms of judicial intimidation and harassment in line with international human rights standards such as the *UN Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary*.

For more information, please contact Linda Besharaty-Movaed, Legal Advisor, at 41-22-979-3800.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

81A, avenue de Châtelaine, P.O. Box 216, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland