



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

CLARIFICATION

In order to shed light on some reports concerning foreigners lured/tricked into working illegally in Cambodia, especially about the “seriousness” of this issue and the “bad conditions” suffered by the victims, thus affecting the country’s image as well as the endeavors by the competent authorities to rescue the victims in the hard fight against this transnational crime that has been happening everywhere in the world, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation would like to offer the other side of the story based on the reports by some local and foreign media outlets.

1. Human trafficking conditions in Cambodia not as serious, bad as reported

A. Interior Ministry Spokesperson: Only 19 among reported 104 cases involve extortion and confinement.

Fresh News reported on 04 September 2022:

- From 01 Jan. to 30 Aug. 2022, the Cambodian authorities intervened in 104 complaint cases, rescued 968 people and detained 82 suspects. However, **only 19 cases of them involved extortion and confinement**, according to H.E. Khieu Sopheak, Secretary of State and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior. As for the rest, the authorities found that they involved labor disputes, contract disputes, restrictions on freedom, switching jobs without consent, debt settlement, discontent with living and working conditions, and instances where worried families pleaded with the authorities to find their missing relatives.

B. Malaysian Envoy reveals bizarre cases of job scam victims in Cambodia

Following are the excerpts from an article by Fatimah Zainal and published in The Star on 04 Sep. 2022:

- "More than 100 Malaysians working for syndicates in Cambodia have been rescued by the Malaysian embassy there since 2018, says Malaysian Ambassador to Cambodia Eldeen Husaini Mohd Hashim."
- "There is also another side of the story. Some of the Malaysians had refused to be rescued or leave Cambodia.

"We have rescued many but many also don't want to go back to Malaysia. Some of them ran away from home, some ran away from ah long.

"Sometimes they don't want to tell their parents the truth.
"When the parents don't know what to do, they create stories that their children got kidnapped and were forced to work but when we went to rescue them, they said they don't want to go back," said Eldeen.
- "He said the embassy had been working hard on this as they felt for the parents who missed their children.
- "We are trying very hard to get them out but all have their own specific case," Eldeen said, noting that frustrated parents tend to take their grievances to MPs, state representatives or the press without grasping the situation."
- "Some of the Malaysians came to Cambodia illegally via lorong tikus (secret passages) and were without travel documents.

"But the embassy can plead for them to be deported instead of being sent to jail," he said when contacted.
- "On claims by families that the Malaysians in the Cambodian immigration depot were not receiving proper food from the embassy or legal counsel, Eldeen said these were all untrue.

"Eldeen said he had personally visited the immigration depot in Sihanoukville and found that the food was being supplied according to schedule and that the living quarters were also not crammed.

"While there was speculation that there were around 60 to 70 Malaysians in the depot, it is believed that the real figure is lower.
- "Eldeen said the operations to rescue the Malaysians were only made possible because of the cooperation by the Cambodian authorities.

"They are helping us a lot. The embassy has been communicating with the Cambodian authorities to get Malaysians out of the syndicates.

"We are also talking to other embassies such as Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia.

"This is a coordinated mission. We have the same problem so we talk to the authorities as a team," he said.

(Note: This story was also reported by Khmer Times on 05 Sep. and RFI on 06 Sep.)

2. Interior Ministry Senior Official: Allegations of organ harvesting and selling human body parts are fabricated.

An article "Bodies of lies: Ministry dismisses allegations about organ harvesting rings" by Taing Rinith in Khmer Times on 06 September 2022 read:

- "A senior government official at the Interior Ministry in charge of combatting human trafficking yesterday dismissed the allegations made by a Hong Kong official and Taiwan journalist that some human trafficking organisations in Cambodia are committing organ harvesting and selling human body parts to the wealthy and on black markets."
- "When contacted yesterday by *Khmer Times*, Chou Bun Eng, the permanent vice-chair of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking, dismissed the allegation.

"Up until now, there has not been a single case of a human trafficking organisation harvesting organs from their victims to be sold," she said. "These stories are all fabricated."

"The so-called issue of organ harvesting taking place in the Kingdom, Bun Eng added, is not new." "The scenario being reported by these people has also been reported in Cambodia, but they all ended up as nothing but lies for the sake of the fake victims' personal gains."

3. Cambodia is endeavoring to fight against all forms of human trafficking.


Samdech Krolahom Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking, underlined in an Appeal on 26 Aug. 2022:

"The National Committee for Counter Trafficking has rolled out an operation plan to scale up its campaign to fight against all forms of human trafficking, forced labor and sex trade, and set up a "Board of Command" tasked to directly lead and conduct the suppression and victim rescue operations. In this regard, I call on the public, the national and international communities, foreign diplomatic missions and embassies in Cambodia, and the competent authorities of international friends to continue providing further information relating to human trafficking and other transnational crimes in order to effectively and timely prevent and suppress them.

Information can be provided via:

1. Facebook page: Samdech Krolahom Sar Kheng, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister.
2. General Commissariat of Nations Police Hotline: 117 and (+855) 31 201 2345.
3. Facebook page: General Commissariat of National Police.
4. Facebook page: General Department of Immigration."

In addition, Chou Bun Eng, Secretary of State of the Interior Ministry and the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) permanent vice-chairwoman was reported by Khmer Times on 08 Sep. 2022 as saying authorities would be able to take better action if details were provided, such as locations, names and nationality of victims, the crime and details of the offenders.

"We cannot investigate and raid the company as it may be a violation of human rights, and we want the victims, the relatives and friends of the victims and the authorities acting in the interest of the victims to provide as many details as possible when making a report or seeking assistance," she underlined. 

Phnom Penh, 09 September 2022

Chum Sounry

Spokesperson of the MFAIC