

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2004

Speech by

Dr. Kek Galabru,
Chairperson for CHRAC

THE CAMBODIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION COMMITTEE (CHRAC)
A coalition of 18 local NGOs working on human rights issues in Cambodia

December 2004



គណៈកម្មាធិការប្រព្រឹត្តិកម្ម ថ្ងៃ អន្តរជាតិ-សមាគមការពារសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា

CAMBODIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION COMMITTEE

ADHOC - CCPCR - CDP - CHHRA - CWCC - GENEROUS - IDA - KID - KHMER CHAM ISLAM - KKKHRA
- KKKHRDA - KSA - KYA - LAC - LICADHO - OUTREACH - TASK FORCE - VIGILANCE

*Preah Karona Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath
Norodom Sihamoni*

Your Majesty,

On behalf of the organizations and individuals gathered here today, please accept my profound gratitude for agreeing to meet with us today on this auspicious occasion of International Human Rights Day.

December 10 marks the day that, in 1948 in Paris, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which outlines the fundamental rights enjoyed by all human beings. For this year (2004), UNESCO and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights have dedicated Human Rights Day to the theme of human rights education. Many of the organizations and individuals gathered here today have directly provided human rights education to the people of Cambodia, as well as assistance to victims of human rights abuses.

Your Majesty has been an ardent supporter of human rights for many years, including all your years of work with UNESCO, whose mandate includes the promotion of human rights education. We are delighted and honored to be here today to support Your Majesty in your continuing efforts to promote and protect human rights in Cambodia. There are many human rights challenges facing Cambodia, and we are grateful for Your Majesty's wisdom and guidance to the Cambodian people and the Royal Government of Cambodia as we all collectively strive to address these challenges.

In particular, we wish to highlight the issue of rule of law in Cambodia to Your Majesty today. The legal system faces many difficulties in dealing with the ongoing serious problems in Cambodia, which include land thefts, rape and sexual abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, and corruption. To deal effectively with these problems, it is necessary to strengthen the rule of law in Cambodia, to ensure that the law is respected by all and that people who commit crimes cannot escape lawful punishment. The strengthening of rule of law is vital to contribute to the development of Cambodia, to reduce poverty, and to ensure the protection and well-being of all the Kingdom's citizens. We believe that rule of law can be improved in Cambodia through fundamental reforms to existing judicial institutions and the courts, the establishment of new independent institutions, and initiatives to eliminate corruption and promote professional standards of conduct by all individuals and institutions involved in upholding Cambodia's laws. Together, with the willpower and hard work of State institutions and all sectors of society, this can be achieved.

On this special day, I am pleased to introduce to Your Majesty ten individuals who represent four categories of people in Cambodia affected by human rights violations. They have agreed to come here today to meet Your Majesty in order to highlight four

pressing human rights problems: land issues; domestic violence; restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in Cambodia; and child abuse. All of these problems are of deep concern to all of us here today, and we are very grateful for the opportunity for these serious victims to meet directly with Your Majesty today.

I would like to once more thank Your Majesty for graciously agreeing to host this special event today, and for your ongoing support for human rights in Cambodia. Under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Your Majesty is given the heavy responsibility to be protector of all the rights and freedoms of all Cambodian citizens. Please be assured that all of us here today offer Your Majesty our gratitude, best wishes and full support in your efforts to promote human rights in Cambodia.

Finally, may Tevodas bless Your Majesty, Samdech Euv and Samdech Mê.
Tevodas bless all of you here.

Thank you for Your kind attention.

Dr. Pung Chhiv Kek
Chairperson