

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION URGES CAMBODIAN POLICE TO EXPAND TRAINING AND INVESTIGATE CHARGES OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

IJM Cambodia collaborates with organizations dedicated to anti-trafficking, healthcare and human rights

WASHINGTON, DC, June 18, 2008: The international human rights organization **International Justice Mission (IJM)** expressed alarm at reports of violence against adult women in the commercial sex industry by Cambodian police and military under the auspices of Cambodia's new anti-trafficking legislation, the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.

IJM urges the Cambodian officials to address the causes of police brutality and expand appropriate training to all members of its police force, and requests that Cambodian officials adhere to the intent of Cambodia's new anti-trafficking law, as well as the rights secured for women in The Convention of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Cambodia is a signatory.

IJM also urges police departments who conduct operations on brothels where overage women are present to no longer detain women and girls in government-sponsored, punitive "reeducation centers," but instead to follow governmental protocol by referring these women to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (MoSAVY) so that MoSAVY officials can place them in open-door women's crisis centers that specialize in caregiving for sexually abused women and can assist the women with access to health care, vocational training and reintegration.

IJM Cambodia Field Office Director Patrick Stayton raised these concerns with Cambodian police and has strongly urged them to investigate and prosecute those who may be implicated. Additionally, Stayton contacted Women's Network for Unity (WNU), a sex worker rights group, to offer assistance in investigating these reports.

"Diversion of police resources for illegitimate and abusive sweeps and arrests of non-trafficked adults undermines the ability of the Cambodian Government to end the scourge of child sexual exploitation," said Stayton. "This misconduct is a grave human rights offense and damages the development of a public justice system that serves those who need and deserve protection against traffickers, pedophiles and other perpetrators of violent abuse."

IJM Cambodia has had a collaborative relationship with the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department of the Cambodian National Police (AHTJP) since 2003. This collaboration has resulted in well-planned and appropriately executed investigations and operations, as well as the convictions of 91 local and foreign pimps, pedophiles and brothel owners who were trafficking or sexually abusing minors.

On Monday, June 9, the Department of AHTJP conducted an intervention at Guest House 99 on Street 63 in Phnom Penh resulting in the removal of 12 minor Vietnamese girls who were transferred to government approved NGO-run aftercare facilities that specialize in the treatment of sexually abused children and the arrest of a suspected brothel owner, manager, and traffickers. IJM had investigated the location and observed minor girls in the facility.

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“The successful intervention by the Department of AHTJP and rescue of twelve minor girls and arrest of the suspected brothel owner and manager is an example of the kind of police activity that is desperately needed in Cambodia,” said Stayton.

Beyond concerns about police abuses, IJM also expressed concern about health care and human rights protections for men and women in the commercial sex industry. IJM urges the Cambodian authorities to carry out lawful and legitimate anti-trafficking operations in ways consistent with access by women and men in the commercial sex industry to health care and HIV prevention services and supplies.

IJM President Gary Haugen, who prior to starting the organization in 1997 served as a senior trial attorney with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice where he investigated and prosecuted cases of police misconduct stated: “Health care and human rights protection for women and men in the commercial sex industry need not be sacrificed to anti-trafficking law enforcement. Similarly, the removal of minor girls from brothels in legitimate and lawful police operations should not be traded off by those promoting HIV services. The protection of minors and trafficked women and the support of basic health care for sex workers are not mutually exclusive initiatives; it is essential that they be mutually supportive.”

About International Justice Mission

International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local governments to ensure immediate victim rescue, to prosecute perpetrators and to strengthen the community and civic factors that promote functioning public justice systems. IJM’s multi-national staff work in 12 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. IJM’s founding principle is the defense and protection of individual human rights for all people by bringing the law to bear on their behalf and by prosecuting perpetrators who violate local and international laws.

Gary Haugen founded IJM in 1997. Previously, he served as a Senior Trial Attorney with the Police Misconduct Task Force of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. When Congress granted the Attorney General new authority to pursue enforcement action against police departments with a "pattern or practice" of misconduct, Haugen was selected to serve on a task force with national enforcement authority. In 1994, Mr. Haugen was detailed from the U.S. Department of Justice to the United Nation's Center for Human Rights where he served as the Officer in Charge of the United Nation’s genocide investigation in Rwanda. Before joining the U.S. Department of Justice, Haugen worked for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. Haugen focused on a structural examination of the Philippine government's prosecution of human rights abuses committed by the police and military. Haugen investigated multiple murders and other violent abuses by the military and police. The work of IJM has been featured by *60 Minutes II*, *Dateline NBC*, *Anderson Cooper 360*, *FOX News*, *MSNBC*, *CNN*, *National Public Radio*, *Forbes Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times*. Learn more about International Justice Mission at www.ijm.org.

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