

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4362/05

by Marco Pannella (ALDE) and Emma Bonino (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: Worsening persecution in Cambodia and violation of the EU-Cambodia agreement

On 11 October 2005 Mam Sonando, owner and manager of Cambodia's only independent radio station, Radio Beehive FM 105, was arrested on the orders of the Public Prosecutor of Phnom Penh, accused of defamation of the Prime Minister Hun Sen and other government leaders. The arrest followed a broadcast interview with Sean Pengse, an expert on issues concerning the borders between Vietnam and Cambodia.

On 15 October 2005 the trade union leader Rong Chhun was arrested for criticising the agreement on those borders and is still in detention (since he was refused bail) awaiting trial.

On 20 October 2005 the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia, Peter Leuprecht, said 'the arrests and detention of Mam Sonando and Rong Chhun in Prey Sar prison are highly irregular, and illustrate a deeply worrying trend'.

The liberal member of parliament Cheam Channy was arrested on 9 August, convicted and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment as part of President Hun Sen's campaign to criminalise the opposition, which is accused of 'defamation' of the government. In view of the obvious risks to his freedom and life the liberal leader Sam Rainsy was forced into exile in France, where he has been for several months.

Western embassies in Cambodia, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Transnational Radical Party have, so far in vain, been denouncing these and other abuses, such as beatings and the enforced repatriation of 'Montagnard' refugees to Vietnam in a context of endemic corruption, whilst Hun Sen blatantly continues to flout international commitments on democracy and human rights, despite being largely dependent on aid from European and other democratic countries.

Can the Commission say:

- whether it intends to continue to refrain from denouncing the EU-Cambodia cooperation agreement in view of the blatant, systematic and aggravated violation of the agreement by the regime in Phnom Penh; if this is so, whether it does not consider that the EU itself is thereby also violating its own legality, as well as international and Community law;
- whether it does not intend to demand an immediate end to the persecution of democratic Cambodians, in particular the liberal leader Sam Rainsy, his members of parliaments and party members?