

Police Release Suspected Foreign Pedophile

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Police arrested and then released a Dutch man this weekend who was suspected of having sex with a 12-year-old boy, officials said Sunday.

Municipal anti-trafficking police detained Ros Wouler, 35, on his way to the airport Saturday morning after investigators from the NGO Action Pour Les Enfants notified them of suspicions about Wouler's activities, municipal anti-trafficking police chief Meng Say said Sunday.

Police then released him on lack of evidence, Meng Say said.

"He is not guilty. We just called him in because we got a complaint from an organization and we suspected him when he delivered money to three or four chil-

dren along the road," he said.

APLE president Thierry Darnaudet said, however, investigators from his organization followed Wouler for more than a week, and observed him pick up a 12-year-old boy and enter a room at Phnom Penh's 799 guest house.

When questioned afterward, the boy described having sex with Wouler, Darnaudet said. Wouler had more than 700 photos on him when arrested, the majority of which were non-pornographic photographs of young children, he said.

Police denied having the confession of the boy as evidence, and said the man liked to take photos of happy youths.

"We don't have any evidence because his photos just show pictures of children in public," said

Keo Thea, deputy municipal anti-trafficking police chief. "He said that he likes smiling children."

Darnaudet was unaware Sunday afternoon of Wouler's release, but said cases relying primarily on victim's testimony are often dropped. The lack of hard evidence can provide a window for police corruption, he added.

Even cases with more substantial proof often fail for lack of evidence, said Aarti Kapoor, legal adviser for the NGO Afesip, which cooperated with APLE to track Wouler in case he left the country.

While corruption at all levels can be a problem, she said, the lack of specific legislation and a limited ability to investigate and analyze forensic evidence also makes it difficult to convict suspected offenders.