



PRESS RELEASE

TWO GERMANS AND THREE VIETNAMESE CONVICTED OF DEBAUCHERY AND TRAFFICKING

PHNOM PENH, 9 MARCH 2007

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court today convicted two German nationals and three Vietnamese nationals of crimes related to the trafficking and sexual exploitation of four young Vietnamese girls.

Henning Karl Heinz OPITZ and Thomas Baron von ENGELHARDT were both convicted of debauchery for the sexual abuse of the four victims and each sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. Photos and videotapes showing both offenders carrying out acts of sexual abuse against the victims were shown at trial and supported by the testimonies of those victims.

OPITZ was additionally sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for the crime of trafficking for his role in the procurement of the four girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Altogether he faces 28 years in a Cambodian jail.

Vietnamese national NGUYEN Hong Voeng and his wife CHENG Thy Yu were both convicted of trafficking and sentenced to 17 years imprisonment. CHENG Thy Heu (also known as Lim Ny), the mother of two of the victims, was also convicted of trafficking and sentenced to 15 years in prison for her role in the forced exploitation of the victims.

All 5 offenders were arrested in August 2006 as a result of the work of APLE and the Phnom Penh Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Unit.

APLE welcomes the sentences passed down for the trafficking crimes. APLE believes this case adds to the momentum being generated by the Cambodian authorities in judiciously and effectively dealing with cases of commercial child sexual exploitation.

APLE feels that the systematic nature and prolonged duration of the sexual abuse perpetrated by OPITZ and ENGELHARDT against many victims could have led to the imposition of the maximum sentence available for their crimes, 20 years. However, sentencing of course remains the prerogative of the Trial Judge.

As a result of the fact that there is no crime related to the production or possession of child pornography in Cambodia, neither OPITZ nor Engelhardt will face any punishment from the Cambodian authorities for the production (over a period of several years) of hundreds of hours of video footage containing child sex abuse images.