



ACTION POUR LES ENFANTS

PRESS RELEASE

Phnom Penh, April 24, 2006

Topic: Damien Walker, Australian, 26, convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison for sexually abusing children.

This morning, the 26 year old, Australian citizen, Damien James Daniel WALKER, was convicted of debauchery at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. He was thereafter sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and ordered pay civil compensation in the amount of 500 US \$ to the victim's family.

Walker was arrested on the 13 December 2005 by the Phnom Penh Anti-human trafficking and Juvenile Protection Unit, as a result of a two week investigation conducted by *Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE)*.

Despite the taking and production of child abusive images having not been criminalized under Cambodian law, the judge took into account the fact that Mr Walker took numerous pictures of the victims, both naked and posing in various sexual positions on handing down his judgement.

The accused acknowledged the facts for which he was accused, and had prepared a letter which was read by the court clerk, in which he said that he was apologized for his conduct.

The 6 victims and the witness, all boys ranging from 11 to 14 years old who live in a slum in Phnom Penh make their living by doing small jobs on the riverside. All attended the trial and the 6 victims testified as to having been abused by the accused. APLE's lawyer represented the victims during the trial.

APLE sees this conviction as a great success and milestone in the Cambodian justice system. Since 2003, this is the 4th offender to be convicted in Cambodia among the 27 men arrested for sexually abusing children in Cambodia (2 of these offenders were convicted after being extradited to the USA). The result of this judgment proves that Cambodian authorities are starting to consider this issue more and more seriously, and is taking more effective measures to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

However, it is important to note that many child sexual abuses remain unpunished in Cambodia, and APLE would like to highlight the importance of cooperation between local and international agencies in order to combat this phenomenon.