



## **ACTION POUR LES ENFANTS**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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**German national Alexander Moritz WATRIN convicted and sentenced to ten (10) years imprisonment for sexually abusing four (4) children.**

Yesterday morning Alexander Moritz WATRIN was convicted of debauchery at the Sihanoukville Municipal Court. He was sentenced to ten (10) years imprisonment and was ordered to pay a total of US\$5000 in civil compensation to the victims and their families.

On 10 April 2006 WATRIN was arrested by the Sihanoukville Anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection unit, as a result of a lengthy investigation conducted by Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE). WATRIN was consequently charged with four (4) counts of debauchery under Article 8 of the 1996 Cambodian Law on the Suppression of the Kidnapping, Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings.

The trial resumed yesterday at 0800hrs after the Trial Judge Svay Sisoroth adjourned proceedings on 5 July 2006 and ordered that psychological testing of the alleged victims be carried out before the judgment was made. The reliability and ability of the victims to testify was therefore tested at the Chey Chumneas Hospital in Kandal Province over a six (6) week period.

WATRIN to date denies the facts for which he was accused. However, at this stage it is uncertain as to whether he will appeal his conviction.

The four (4) victims, all boys aged 10, 11, 12 and 17 are street working children. Three (3) boys attended the trial and testified as to having been abused on a number of occasions, often as a group, by the accused.

APLE views this conviction as a milestone for the Cambodian judicial system. Namely, the manner in which the Sihanoukville Court dealt with this case was extraordinary and has demonstrated that the Cambodian authorities are beginning to take steps to ensure child sexual abuse cases are dealt with appropriately. Firstly, the Trial Judge adjourned proceeding in July 2005 demonstrating an unprecedented willingness to give due weight to child testimonies. Secondly, the Court not only proceeded with this case but convicted WATRIN of debauchery despite the lack of child abuse images. And lastly, the Court employed reasonable special testifying procedures to protect the child victims.