

Cambodia - A Parting Assessment

Justice Kirby Collection

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Notes: This is Justice Kirby's last report as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia.

CONTINUED PROGRESS

This is my last report as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia. Appointment to the supreme court of my country, Australia, has obliged me to offer my resignation. It will take effect from 1 May 1996. My successor will be Mr Thomas Hammarberg of Sweden. This report draws upon contact with Cambodia virtually every day since I took up my office in November 1993. But it deals especially with my seventh mission to Cambodia for ten days in January 1996.

As in the past, I can record progress in a number of areas of relevant to human rights. They deserve acknowledgment and praise.

All of these are positive signs. As in the past, I give full credit for these and for other achievements mentioned in my report. But an honest report requires me to identify certain problem areas. I have raised these with the Government of Cambodia. Only by identifying them can the mandate of promoting and protecting human rights in Cambodia be achieved and well targeted technical advice and assistance given.

PROBLEM AREAS

Amongst the problem areas called to notice in my report are the following:

ON DEPARTURE

He will find in Cambodia, as I have, important elements of progress but continuing areas of worrying difficulty. This is unsurprising. The cause of human rights requires sensitivity, respect for the dignity of a proud people, understanding of their past sufferings and appreciation of their enormous economic and social difficulties. But it also requires honesty and courage, to tell the truth and to offer the hand of friendship, respectful advice and generous technical assistance, where needed.

My service as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cambodia will always be one of the greatest professional privileges of my life. It is a privilege which I will always carry in my mind and in my heart. I pay my respects to this Commission, which has listened with patience to my successive reports. To the High Commissioner, the Assistant Secretary-

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General and the officers of the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva and Phnom Penh who have given me unfailing help and highly professional assistance for the discharge of my duties. To His Majesty the King of Cambodia who has proved a stalwart friend to the cause of human rights. To the Government of Cambodia, whose difficulties I have never underestimated. To the human rights groups and people of Cambodia. For most of them, the name of the United Nations is precious. Its mission is noble. By serving the United Nations and the Secretary-General, I have been privileged to serve a noble cause.