

CAMBODIA: CIVIL UNREST

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The Disaster

The political tension that has been building in Cambodia over the past several weeks erupted over the weekend of 5 July when troops split in their allegiance to the first Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh and second Prime Minister Hun Sen. Three days of fighting in the capital Phnom Penh followed leaving scores of dead and injured. PM Ranariddh left the country before the hostilities started. His wife, who is the President of the Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRCS), accompanied him. Currently it appears as if Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party (CPP) is in control of Phnom Penh. A nightly curfew has been put into place and a state of emergency declared.

On 9 July, the CRCS Secretary General (also Minister of State), Dr. Huot Hong, left the country indefinitely, following assurances by the CPP that he would not be harmed as he left the country. Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Sakhon Ngoun is Acting Secretary General.

The situation in the provinces is less clear. There are unconfirmed reports of fighting and troop movements in the north western provinces of Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap leading to concern that troops loyal to the First Prime Minister may launch an offensive against CPP forces in those areas. There is also speculation that the troops may link up with the remnants of the Khmer Rouge still active in the area.

Roads into and out of the area remain closed. On 9 July a limited number of domestic flights resumed while some 2,000 expatriates were flown out on military transporters over the past few days. Other foreign nationals, including several Red Cross bilateral delegates, travelled to Thailand by road on Sunday from Battambang where tension is extremely high.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Strict security measures were immediately implemented within the Delegation which is comprised of a Head of Delegation, Finance-Administration Delegate, and two Development Delegates. The Branch Development Delegate was restricted to Kampong Chhnang over the weekend but was able to move into Phnom Penh 8 July. The others remained together until the fighting subsided and were confined to quarters until 8 July. Delegation travel has been restricted to essential business only. The Delegation will be downsized to the HOD and one Development Delegate for support to the CRCS until the

situation stabilises. The other Delegate and dependants are scheduled to fly to Bangkok on 10 July along with others from ICRC and bilateral programmes.

The Finance-Administration Delegate is currently attending a workshop in Kuala Lumpur and will remain with the Regional Delegation until further notice.

Delegates from the Federation, ICRC, and National Societies with bilateral programmes have been working closely together on security issues and in support of the CRCS. The Federation office reopened on 8 July and local staff reported back to work. The Head of Delegation has had several meetings with CRCS officials and it is difficult to predict how this latest turn of events will affect the managerial structure of the Society.

The Security Officer at the Secretariat, and the Asia & Pacific Department are in close contact with both the Delegation and National Societies with Delegates in-country. With the exception of one 24-hour period, telephone and electronic mail contact have been possible.

Needs

Needs are unknown at this time. On 9 July a meeting of humanitarian organisations was held in Phnom Penh to develop a co-ordinated approach to meeting the needs of the many displaced. The results of this meeting will guide the direction the CRCS and Federation will take in needs assessment. As the situation develops further information will be provided to the National Societies.

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