

CAMBODIA: CIVIL UNREST

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The Context

Factional fighting that began on 5 July between forces loyal to Co-Prime Minister Hun Sen and Co-Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh resulted in the ousting of Prince Ranariddh who had fled the country shortly before. Although Hun Sen and the Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP) maintain firm control in Phnom Penh, and foreign nationals who left during the fighting are gradually returning, low level clashes and skirmishes between CPP forces and troops loyal to Ranariddh continue in the far north of the country, resulting in large numbers of internally displaced persons. These IDPs are located in four provinces: Battambang, Siem Reap, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom. Another 21,770 persons have fled the fighting in the Samraong and O'Smach area, and are now packed in the Thai village of Chong Thom, approximately seven kilometres from the border, and just across from the Cambodian town of O'Smach.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Federation is currently represented by an Acting Head of Delegation who is working closely with the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) in the present situation. The AHoD liaises with ICRC, and representatives of National Societies with bilateral programmes in the country, regarding security issues and support to CRC.

Cambodia

Following the cessation of hostilities the CRC provided assistance to people hospitalised with injuries. It went on to convene a series of meetings with the aid community on emergency assistance and participated in surveys with line agencies in most affected provinces (especially in Siem Reap) to determine needs.

Plans are being drawn up to assist the IDPs with household goods and other relief items once they are able to return to their homes, many of which have been ransacked. CRC is also working with UN and other agencies on assistance to the refugees when they return to Cambodia.

The CRC and other agencies are ready to start relief distributions to IDPs in the northern provinces, but these have been held up by access problems. Two main bridges into Samraong district in Siem Riep Province were blown up, and landmines have been laid

along the main road to Samraong. The CRC and WFP are repairing the bridges. Demining of the road is underway. It is hoped to start the relief distributions next week. The overall possible development of relief operations was one of the topics of discussions between the Secretariat's Asia and Pacific Director and the new CRC leadership, during the Director's visit to Cambodia, 20 - 22 August.

Thailand

To cope with the influx of Cambodian nationals fleeing fighting in north-western Cambodia, the government of Thailand has established a camp for displaced persons near the Thai border village of Chong Chom. It has designated the Thai Red Cross as the co-ordinating entity for all NGO activities in the camp. The NGOs present are the International Relief Committee, International Christelejik Steunfound, MSF and a German organisation, MHD. The camp population as of 27 August was 21,770, of whom 10,533 were male, and 11,237 female.

The Thai Red Cross is responsible for:

- an out-patient clinic, providing diagnostic services for approximately 800 Cambodians per day
- an in-patient clinic, which is admitting about 80 people per day.
- distributing dry foodstuffs provided by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to the entire camp population. Quantities distributed by 27 August: 40 tonnes of rice and 50,000 cans of fish.
- distributing plastic sheeting to build shelters, to the entire camp population
- providing sixteen 2,000 litre water tanks

The medical services are being provided by 10-person medical teams (two doctors, three nurses, two assistant nurses, a pharmacist and two administrative staff) of the Thai Red Cross, serving on a one-week rotational basis.

The Thai Red Cross health station located in Surin City, 60 kilometres from Chong Chom is serving as a warehouse base. Volunteers from the Surin chapter are being used for the food distributions and for administrative support in the camp medical facility.

The Federation's regional delegation in Kuala Lumpur is standing by to provide any assistance which may be required. Last week, the regional Health Delegate went to the Thai border for a further assessment of the health of the Cambodian refugees. At present the Thai Red Cross is drawing on its own resources and considerable expertise in refugee camp services for the implementation of this emergency relief operation.

Conclusion

The security situation in Cambodia remains tense and unpredictable. The Federation Delegation will continue monitoring events and providing support to CRC relief efforts. Societies will be kept informed of any new developments or needs. For further details, please contact Desk Officer Xusheng Yang at +41-22-730 42 68.

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