



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

Sok Yoeun, PoC, Thailand, 2004

Prisoner of conscience Sok Yoeun was freed from a Thai jail on 26 February 2004, after spending more than four traumatic years behind bars. Sok Yoeun's release followed a sustained campaign by Amnesty International members who wrote thousands of letters in his support.

Sok Yoeun was arrested in Thailand in December 1999, after he fled Cambodia following false allegations linking him to an attack on the Prime Minister of Cambodia. A member of a Cambodian opposition political party, he was accused of involvement in a 1998 rocket attack which Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed was aimed at him. Two other opposition party activists were arrested in connection with the attack, held in isolation for six months, and released due to lack of evidence. Sok Yoeun fled the country to escape arrest, unfair trial and possible torture.

He was granted refugee status by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in November 1999, but was arrested by Thai authorities and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for entering the country illegally. His arrest was believed to have been carried out because of pressure from the Cambodian authorities. When the six-month sentence expired in June 2000, Sok Yoeun remained in detention pending the outcome of a request for his extradition to Cambodia. During his detention he was held in harsh overcrowded conditions and his health seriously deteriorated.

Amnesty International members campaigned tirelessly for Sok Yoeun's release, through Urgent Actions, Medical Letter-writing Actions, publicity and government lobbying. Members sent thousands of seasonal greeting cards to Sok Yoeun during his imprisonment, for which he was extremely grateful. Amnesty International Thailand coordinated a postcard campaign targeting the Thai authorities, which was taken up by members across the world.

Sok Yoeun was finally reunited with his family in Finland, one day after his release. Speaking to reporters upon his arrival, he said:

"I've been saved from the throes of death, I will never forget this day in my life. I now have two fatherlands. Finland is a new home. I'm so happy to be with my family and I hope that my children who are still in Thailand and Cambodia can soon join us."

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Amnesty International for its constant efforts for my release from prison," Sok Yoeun told Amnesty International members a month later, **"and to send my respect and the expression of my highest consideration to all your collaborators devoted in their difficult tasks of helping the whole world."**

https://adam.amnesty.org/asset-bank/action/search?attribute_603=Stories+of+Success+%2F+Sok+Yoeun