



# AFESIP INTERNATIONAL

*Acting For Women in Distressing Circumstances  
Agir Pour Les Femmes En Situation Précaire*

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## Official AFESIP Press Statement on Events

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Organised Crime calls for all its signatories, including Cambodia, to criminalise trafficking of human beings and the prostitution of others. The Cambodian Law on Suppression of Kidnapping, Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings criminalises pimping, procuring and receiving benefits from the prostitution of another. Thus, following the UN Palermo Protocol, the Royal Government of Cambodia has recognised that such **prostitution activities are supported by the trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation, many of whom are children.**

Investigations by AFESIP and the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection of the Ministry of Interior (AHTJP) revealed a large brothel operating from a hotel where up to 200 girls and women from the age of 15 years and over were being offered for sexual services. The Dept of AHTJP, with authority from the Ministry of Interior and Chief Prosecutor to the Phnom Penh Court, undertook a raid on Chai Hour II Hotel, Phnom Penh, at approximately 4.30 pm on 7 December 2004. As a result of the raid and further events, 8 suspects were arrested. At least one of these suspects was recognised in the preliminary investigations as an owner of the business. 83 girls and women were also brought in for questioning and identification. Following normal procedures with the Ministry of Interior, those rounded up in such raids are offered shelter at AFESIP, whilst investigations are ongoing, as a better alternative than to be kept at the Dept of AHTJP. The Dept of AHTJP sent police protection to the centre.

73 girls and women were brought to the AFESIP shelter on the night of the raid (7 December 2004) and 10 were kept behind at the Dept. These would be rotated until all had been interviewed. AFESIP staff explicitly informed all of the new residents of the shelter that after the interviewing was complete they would be free to leave if they wanted to. The 10 initially kept behind were brought to the AFESIP Shelter on the morning of 8 December 2004. 9 other residents at the AFESIP Shelter were there before the raid of the hotel. Thus, the Shelter was housing 92 girls and women on the morning of 8 December 2004, 83 of whom were from the Chai Hour Hotel. By this time much of the police protection had waned and reinforcements were being requested.

By the morning of 8 December 2004, the 8 suspects, that had been arrested and detained, had been released without charge or official reason.

At approximately 12 pm of 8 December 2004, 25 to 30 men and women attacked the AFESIP shelter, broke down the gates and took many of the girls and women that were residing there. One of these men was recognised as one of the suspects that had been released that morning and was thought to be an “owner” of the business. At least one female AFESIP member of staff was assaulted. At the time there were at least 2 police men guarding the gates on the outside, but were

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overcome. Altogether 91 girls and women have disappeared from the AFESIP centre, (including 8 residents who had nothing to do with the Chai Hour II Hotel).

Previous informal information gathering by AFESIP staff of the girls and women established that many of them stated they were under 18 years of age when asked directly. One girl states she was 16 years of age and had received bruises on her arm as result of beatings at the Hotel. She clearly stated her fear of having to return to the Hotel. From such information gathered by AFESIP staff, the attackers are clearly accused of **kidnapping of children for sexual exploitation.**

It has been brought to the attention of AFESIP that a number of women, claiming to be among those that were at the AFESIP Shelter as a result of the Chai Hour Raid, have filed a complaint against AFESIP with the Chief of Phnom Penh Municipal Police Mr Heng Pov. They are claiming that they were not selling sexual services and were being illegally held. It must be highlighted in response to this that the raid was undertaken by the Dept of AHTJP, not AFESIP. The raid was a result of independent police investigations into the allegations that AFESIP made. Those girls and women that were brought to the AFESIP Shelter were still under police responsibility and were still to undergo preliminary interviewing to further investigate their involvement in the alleged criminal activities of Chai Hour II Hotel and of the 8 suspects arrested and detained. Thus, any complaint should not be directed against AFESIP but against the Cambodian Authorities.

Furthermore, any statement alleging that activities of prostitution were **not** occurring at Chai Hour II Hotel is a question for the **court** to decide. If this is found to be a false statement than it is requested that any other allegations and statements made by the “managers and employees” of Chai Hour II Hotel should be rendered unreliable as well.

**AFESIP appeals to the Government of Cambodia to make an independent enquiry into the facts of this case. Direct investigation as to why the 8 suspects were released and follow up off all of those girls and women that were taken from the AFESIP Shelter is needed. Furthermore, those girls and women that were either under age or were being prostituted against their own accord must be freed and offered safe sanctuary and care. These include those 8 residents who had no involvement with the Chair Hour II Raid. The Chai Hour II Hotel should be closed down until its activities have been fully investigated.**

AFESIP  
20.00 hrs  
12 December 2004