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LICADHO

CAMBODIAN LEAGUE FOR THE PROMOTION
AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Media statement

LICADHO welcomes the reported criminal investigations and prosecutions in the United States in connection to the adoption of children from Cambodia.

According to documents filed in a US District Court in Seattle, Washington, two Americans are being prosecuted for adoption-related crimes. One is Lynn Devin, director of the Seattle International Adoptions agency, and the other is her sister Lauryn Galindo, an adoption facilitator.

Devin pleaded guilty on December 10, 2003 to charges of conspiracy to commit visa fraud and conspiracy to launder money. She is expected to be sentenced in March 2004.

Galindo, according to a court document filed in November 2003, has been charged with conspiracy to commit visa fraud and with committing visa fraud. She has not been arrested and is yet to go to trial.

“We welcome the actions taken by US law enforcement authorities to investigate and prosecute American citizens for alleged adoption-related crimes,” said Kek Galabru, president of LICADHO. “This sends an important message to adoption facilitators and agencies that their actions must remain within the law.”

“Such investigations and prosecutions are vital to deter abuses of the adoption system, and to protect everyone involved in adoptions - Cambodian children and birth parents, and foreign adoptive parents.”

The charges against Devin and Galindo relate to the adoptions of Cambodian children by families in the US based upon allegedly false information given to US authorities to obtain visas for the children. Court documents accuse Devin, Galindo and other conspirators of using “fictitious documentation” to provide “false identities” to the adopted children.

Devin and Galindo charged US adoptive parents more than US\$10,000 for the adoptions, according to the court documents. The children were adopted through orphanages in Cambodia including Kompong Speu orphanage and WOVA orphanage in Sihanoukville.

“LICADHO urges the Cambodian authorities to investigate these two orphanages, and others which have been the subject of allegations in recent years, to determine whether crimes have been committed under Cambodian law,” said Naly Pilorge, LICADHO’s director.

“We are very happy with the prosecutions in the US but we also feel that it’s time for the Cambodian authorities to prosecute Cambodians engaged in crimes related to adoptions,” she said. “The Cambodian police and courts also need to take part in protecting children,

and the lack of serious investigations and prosecutions in Cambodia has been very disappointing.”

LICADHO also urges foreign governments to remain vigilant when processing applications for adoptions of Cambodian children, and to take action if abuses of the law are identified.

“Because of the weak state of Cambodian law enforcement, it’s even more important that authorities in countries which receive Cambodian children investigate and prosecute their citizens whenever there is evidence of adoption crimes,” said Naly Pilorge

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