

## Chea Vichea Documentary Receives Prestigious US Award

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THE CAMBODIA DAILY

A documentary that has been banned in Cambodia about the unsolved assassination of prominent Free Trade Union (FTU) president Chea Vichea took home a prestigious American media award on Wednesday night, leading his family members to again call on the government to reopen investigations into his slaying.

"Who Killed Chea Vichea?"—a 58-minute documentary that follows the police investigation into the union leader's killing—won a George Foster Peabody Award, one of the oldest media awards in the US that each year recognizes excellence and public service in radio, TV and new media.

Bradley Cox, director of the documentary, said he was honored and surprised to have received the award. "When I was growing up, I always knew the Peabodys, and I always considered it a serious and prestigious award.... I figured I had

little chance of winning at all," he said in an interview from Bangkok yesterday. Mr. Cox said he hopes the publicity gained from the award will bring wider attention to Chea Vichea's unsolved case.

"Almost inevitably, whenever someone sees the movie, they would comment 'I knew it was bad there [Cambodia], but I had no idea it was this bad.' It wakes them up to the situation there," Mr. Cox said. "[Winning the award] is really about [showing] the continuing plight of the Cambodian people, and the more attention it gets, the better it is."

Chea Vichea, who championed for the rights of tens of thousands of garment workers and helped bring about the country's first minimum wage, was gunned down in 2004 in broad daylight in Phnom Penh.

"Who Killed Chea Vichea?" follows the police investigation, including the arrests and convictions of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun, two men widely believed to be scapegoats for the assassination. Convicted and held in jail for almost five years,

the Supreme Court released the pair in December 2008 and ordered a reinvestigation into the killing.

Speaking by telephone from the city of Askoo in southern Finland, Chea Kimny, Chea Vichea's wife, expressed gratitude for the recognition gained by the award, which she hopes will push for renewed efforts to find her husband's murderer.

Following his murder, Chea Vichea's family fled to Finland, where they were granted political asylum.

"In the last eight years, I have not felt any calm. I always think of why the government has not found the killer who murdered my husband," Ms. Kimny said. "I would like to request that all the people and the world support and continue the call for the government to investigate."

Chea Mony, current FTU president and Chea Vichea's brother, echoed that a wider audience for the documentary will bring more attention to his late brother's plight.

"The killers have not been found yet, even if we know who the killer is," said Mr. Mony, who has for

years implicated the government in the death of his brother. "This award will bring wider attention to what is happening in Cambodia with the problems of impunity."

Mr. Mony said that plans for erecting a statue of his brother, to which Prime Minister Hun Sen recently consented, are still being discussed at city hall regarding its design, but will likely move forward this year.

Phay Siphon, spokesman at the Council of Ministers, who saw the documentary last year, said the Peabody Awards were likely a "politically motivated" institution, as the documentary should be considered "propaganda."

"It's a campaign against the government.... It's more like propaganda," said Mr. Siphon, adding that anyone can submit a complaint to the Ministry of Interior about the killing of Chea Vichea if they want to.

"Yes, the case is still open. The investigation is still open," Mr. Siphon added.

*(Additional reporting by Eang Mengleng)*