

Radio Broadcast Lands Five Takeo Men in Court

Takeo Provincial Court will try five men accused of criminal disinformation over a 2008 Radio Free Asia broadcast on the alleged mishandling of funds by local Muslim leaders in Borei Cholsar district, court officials said Monday. Court Director Tith Sothy said the hearing was scheduled for this month. The case stems from a 2007 petition, thumbprinted by 206 families from Kompong Yol village, demanding new elections to choose representatives for the local mosque. The villagers suspected a three-man committee, responsible for the mosque's funds, of mishandling about \$2,500 and expressed their views in a 2008 interview with RFA. The men indicted include RFA reporter Sok Serey, villagers Ny San and Sib Sen, and two activists with the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, Chiep Cheav and Khim Sarom. Mr Serey's lawyer, Moung Sokun, said he received the summons—which mentions a Feb 9 court date—last week. He added that another RFA reporter, Tin Zakariya, was also called to the trial as a witness. Mr Serey declined to comment when contacted Monday. CCHR president Ou Virak noted that Mr Cheav and Mr Sarom were not paid CCHR staff, but added that the group would monitor the case. "They are just villagers working for us as activists, but we will follow the case in the court," he said. (*Phorn Bopha*)