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Grenade Attack Survivors Mark Nine Years

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The memories of the day shrapnel tore through her body, deadening her legs and leaving a jagged reminder across her stomach, still fill Or Sina with fear.

Sitting in her wheelchair at a commemorative service for the March 30, 1997, grenade attack's ninth anniversary, the 47-year-old wrung her hands and said she recalled the day with perfect clarity.

"I was raising my fist, demanding the government stop factory abuses. We were all so happy to be there," she said.

"Then there was a grenade flash."

Or Sina, then a garment factory worker, was among the 120 wounded when four grenades were thrown into a peaceful demonstration led by Sam Rainsy, president of the party that bears his name, in front of the National Assembly building. More than a dozen people were killed.

On Thursday, monks prayed for the dead and SRP members gave small sums of money to injured victims and \$50 each to the families of those who died.

"I just want the government to find the killers," Or Sina said in a

speech. "I just stay at home. I still feel scared."

Rights groups and citizens at large said they, too, want the crime solved, saying that officials have never launched a serious investigation.

In a statement issued Wednesday, New York-based Human Rights Watch said the Cambodian government has made "no progress in bringing the perpetrators to justice," and called on the US to reopen its investigation of the attack. The US investigated because American Ron Abney was wounded in the incident.

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"The grenade attack sent a message that to oppose those in power is dangerous, even lethal, while those in charge who commit the worst kinds of human rights violations will get away with murder," Human Rights Watch Asia Director Brad Adams said in the statement.

The Rights Watch statement questioned the absence of any investigation and the decision of Prime Minister Hun Sen to arrest protest organizers and prevent them from leaving the country shortly after the attack. It also said government officials had failed to adequately respond to witnesses' accusations that the prime minister's bodyguard unit helped the attackers escape.

No one has ever been arrested for the attack.

Information Minister and government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said the grenade attack investigation has stalled because leads have fallen through.

"Now we are back to square one.... We have nothing to go on," he said, adding that the government would appreciate "if someone can provide some clues." He added: "Every country has cold cases."

Khieu Sopheak, Interior Ministry spokesman, said that more time was needed for results.

"Police are still investigating. But we need time. Once we get more relevant information, we will add it to the record," he said.

Human Rights Watch also blasted the US government and National Police Commissioner Hok Lundy.

"The [US Federal Bureau of Investigation] this month awarded a medal to the Cambodian Chief of National Police, Hok Lundy, for his support of the US global 'war on terror,'" read the report. "Hok Lundy was chief of the national police at the time of the grenade attack and has long been linked to political violence," Rights Watch added.

Khieu Sopheak said the rights organization had defamed the national police chief. "That is

defamation. I deny this," Khieu Sopheak said.

"If they say this they could be thrown in jail," he added.

Ron Abney, who was country director for the International Republican Institute in 1997, said in a statement Thursday that he felt government officials had tried to "laugh off these killings."

"When people talk about a democracy existing in Cambodia, let them first ask, 'Are the people's basic rights upheld?'" he said. Abney dropped a lawsuit against Hun Sen over the attack in February.

"You cannot have so many people killed and so many people injured and have no investigation," SRP lawmaker Son Chhay said at the memorial. "You cannot run away from it.... People will continue to ask for this justice," he added.

As the memorial ceremony ended, Ly Neary sat on a mat, clutching a framed photograph of her son, 29-year-old Ly Daravuth, who died in the explosions.

"I look at his picture every day and miss him," she said. As for justice, Ly Neary said she had given up hope.