

BANGKOK

Govt attacked for expelling 26 refugees

Geneva, Switzerland, Dec. 4 (AP) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan formally protested to the government of Thailand Friday for its forcible return of 26 Cambodian refugees.

The expulsion of the refugees, who had spent five weeks in Thailand reportedly took place November 23. Reliable reports cited by Bangkok newspapers — but not confirmed in Geneva — claimed the refugees were killed immediately after falling into the hands of the Cambodians.

In his protest note, handed to a Thai representative in Geneva, the prince objected that his office had not been informed in advance of the Thai authorities' intention to return the refugees. He said his office might have been able to place the refugees elsewhere.

The note also recalled that the forcible return of asylum-seekers was a violation of a U.N. agreement to which the Thai government expressly stated its adherence in a joint communique with the commission last year.

Announcement that the protest was made was an unusual move by the U.N. body which as a rule prefers quiet diplomacy to avoid abuse of refugee rights.

The only other recent official protest was addressed to Iran over the return of a Soviet pilot who had sought asylum after landing in a small plane a few weeks ago.

CHINA POST DEC. 4, 76

UN to find cause of refugees repatriation

Bangkok, Dec. 3 (AP) The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has handed letters to senior Thai diplomats in Geneva and New York formally seeking an explanation of Thailand's force-

ful repatriation of 26 Cambodian refugees, reliable refugee sources here said Friday.

Although the content of the note was not available, the sources say the UNHCR representatives here have been deeply disturbed by the repatriations last week and haven't been persuaded by the Thai government's argument that the 26 were Communist agents sent to Thailand by the Khmer Rouge.

The UNHCR office here has relayed detailed information about the incident to its headquarters in Geneva where the diplomatic notes were prepared this week, the sources said.

The UNHCR, which funds much of the program for Thailand's estimated 70,000 Indochinese refugees, is against forceful repatriations.

Reports have circulated that the 26 were executed by the Khmer Rouge upon their return to Cambodia, but this is difficult to confirm.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL,
Friday, Nov. 26, 1976

* * *

Thailand forcibly returned to Cambodia 26 refugees who fled that Communist nation last month. Most of the 26, whom Thailand described as security risks, were thought to be former officials of the defeated Lon Nol government. The new Thai military rulers also announced that they no longer will permit refugees from Indochina to remain. Thousands already are in Thailand and more arrive almost daily.

* * *