

No Charges Yet for US Missionary Accused of Child Abuse

By *Khuon Narim* - December 14, 2013

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court on Friday continued to question, but did not bring charges against, American missionary Daniel Johnson, who was arrested Monday in relation to sex crimes committed in the U.S. and who is now accused of raping five boys at an orphanage in Phnom Penh.

The 35-year-old's lawyer, Tuot Lux, said by telephone that his client would continue to be questioned on Saturday at the court, although he said it appeared the prosecutor does not have enough evidence to charge the U.S. citizen.

"The prosecutor has not yet charged him [Johnson], because he is reviewing what he should be charged with, because there is very thin evidence, and the only evidence is a child's testimony," the lawyer said.

During questioning at the court, Mr. Lux said Johnson denied abusing the children in his care.

"He said that he didn't abuse the child, and he wondered why children accused him and asked the court to question the children," Mr. Lux said.

Johnson is accused of raping five boys between the ages of 11 and 15 at an orphanage in Meanchey district's Boeng Tampoun commune called the Home of Hope, where he had worked as the director.

The orphanage is one of several projects operated by Hope Transitions, an evangelical Christian group.

The allegations of sexual abuse in Cambodia emerged after the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the U.S. investigated the missionary and sought his extradition to face charges of child sex crimes there.

Pol Phithey, director of the Ministry of Interior's anti-human trafficking police department, said the municipal court has ordered that Johnson be held in custody at the department until

it has finished questioning the suspect.

The five alleged victims of abuse are now in the care of Hagar International Cambodia.

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