

AND ALSO

Lesbians Not Just From Lesbos

REUTERS

ATHENS, Greece - A Greek court has dismissed a request by residents of the island of Lesbos to ban the use of the word lesbian to describe gay women, according to a court ruling made public Tuesday.

Three residents of Lesbos, birthplace of the ancient Greek poetess Sappho, whose love poems inspired the term lesbian, argued that the use of the term in reference to gay

women insulted their identity.

The court said the word did not define the identity of the residents of the island, and could be validly used by gay groups in Greece and abroad. The plaintiffs were ordered to pay expenses of \$366.

"A court in Athens could not stop people around the world from using [the word]. It was ridiculous," said Vassilis Chirdaris, lawyer for Greece's Gay and Lesbian Union.

Temple...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

General Koichiro Matsuura on Monday, Prime Minister Hun Sen accused Thailand of defying "all principles of international law" with behavior that "gravely threatens peace and stability in the region."

The letter informed Unesco, which serves as the secretariat for the 21-nation World Heritage Committee that inscribed Preah Vihear temple as a heritage site on July 7, of the Thai troop buildup around the temple and failed efforts to defuse the tensions.

"As of 21 July 2008, the situation has escalated further due to the movement of Thai artillery and armored combat vehicles into the area and the continuing increase of heavily armed Thai soldiers" near Preah Vihear temple, Hun Sen said in the letter, which was made available Tuesday by the Council of Ministers.

"The Royal Government of Cambodia would like to request the Unesco to take urgent action for the protection of this World Heritage Site," Hun Sen said in the letter.

Hun Sen also requested that Unesco ask the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly "to take measures that would lead to a peaceful resolution and avoid any armed confrontation."

Unesco officials could not be reached for comment Tuesday. However, last week, Unesco Chief of Unit for East Asia and the Pacific Giovanni Boccardi said Unesco would not intervene.

"I don't think that it would be within the mandate of Unesco, as a specialized UN Agency working in the field of Education, Sciences and Culture, to mediate between two countries on legal matters related to territorial disputes," Boccardi said in an e-mail July 17.

The requests for UN interven-

tion came after Monday's peace talks with Thailand failed to defuse the tense scene at Preah Vihear temple, where officials say thousands of heavily armed Thai and Cambodian troops are stationed.

During the peace talks, Defense Minister Tea Banh offered to draw down Cambodian troops stationed at Preah Vihear and also remove the Cambodian market vendors at the nearby temple's steps if Thailand agreed to withdraw its troops and restore the situation to its pre-July 15 level, Hor Namhong said.

Thailand refused, he said, and continues to claim its troops are on Thai land.

Hor Namhong said he asked Singapore, the chair of Asean, on Monday to form a four-nation regional group to help find a peaceful solution to the "escalating" crisis with "Thai troops with artilleries" and "tanks" building up along the border.

However, Thailand has "rejected any role of Asean in the matter," Hor Namhong said Tuesday, leaving UN intervention as the last solution.

Officials at the Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

In a statement posted late Tuesday on the Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry Web site, Thailand said its representative at today's meeting of Asean foreign ministers in Singapore insisted that bilateral negotiations continue without Asean intervention.

The next bilateral meeting will be held after Cambodia's general election, according to the Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry, which said Cambodia acted prematurely in bringing the matter to Asean.

According to a statement issued Monday by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesman, the UN leader is "closely following the situation" and is "concerned about the current escalation of tensions."

Yet as of Tuesday evening, Cambodia's complaint was not on the

NEWSMAKERS

■ Cambodian reporters **CHHEANG BOPHA** and **DUONG SOKHA** have been awarded the Hellman/Hammett Writers Award for courage in the face of political persecution, Human Rights Watch announced Tuesday. Rights Watch senior researcher Sara Colm said Tuesday the award recognized intrepid reporting in an increasingly hostile environment and also the reporters' principled stance during a labor dispute at former French-language daily *Cambodge Soir*. Staff went on strike last year to protest the politically motivated firing of a reporter. Chheang Bopha and Duong Sokha refused to return, opting to work at an independent Franco-Khmer Web journal instead. Chheang Bopha said Tuesday she hoped the prize would embolden other Cambodian reporters. "I hope with this prize that that other journalists may...be a bit more courageous, forget money a little and say what others are trying to hide," she said. (*Douglas Gillison*)

15-nation UN Security Council's agenda for July, nor did Cambodian officials know when the complaint would be heard or what the UN could do.

Vietnam, president of the UN Security Council for July, has urged "both sides to use restraint, avoid allowing complicated developments, and try to settle the outstanding issues through peaceful negotiations in the spirit of friendship and solidarity of Asean," according to a statement posted Monday on the Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Ministry Web site.

The Vietnamese Embassy had no updates on the nation's stance Tuesday.

US Ambassador Joseph Mursomeli, after the meeting Tuesday morning, said he did not know what stance will be taken by the US—one of the Security Council's five permanent members—nor did the US Embassy have a stance on who rightfully owns the pagoda where Thai troops have amassed since July 15.

"It is still very unclear that this has to go to the Security Council. We remain hopeful that this can be resolved bilaterally, and if not bilat-

erally, then in an Asean context," Mursomeli said.

"We're very impressed so far with the restraint that Cambodia and Thailand have shown," he added. "When you have that many young men with that many weapons in that close a proximity, there is always a danger of violence."

Both Cambodia and Thailand reportedly agreed at Monday's bilateral meeting to not increase troop levels at Preah Vihear, but Cambodian officials said Tuesday that Thailand appeared to be increasing its forces elsewhere along the border.

Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon said Thailand has amassed 10 army tanks, attack helicopters and 1,000 troops near the border with Oddar Meanchey province.

And patrolling along the border with Banteay Meanchey province are another 500 to 600 Thai troops, up from 40 before July 15, said provincial police chief Hun Hean.

Hun Hean and Phay Siphon declined to say how many Cambodian troops are stationed along the border.

(Additional reporting by Kim Chan)

Asean Fails To Achieve Breakthrough on Standoff

SINGAPORE - Southeast Asian nations failed Tuesday to mediate a smoldering border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, which grabbed most of the attention at a meeting of Asia-Pacific powers. Foreign ministers from Asean met their counterparts from China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand for talks ranging from North Korea nuclear diplomacy to food and energy security. But with Thailand and Cambodia in a military showdown over Preah Vihear temple, Asean has been distracted from geopolitical issues by one of the periodic intramural spats that feeds skepticism about the 41-year-old group's ambitions to become a coherent political and economic bloc. Asean foreign ministers offered their good offices to mediate the dispute at a working lunch Tuesday. Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo, host for this year's Asean ministerial meeting, said both sides "reiterated they were committed to a peaceful resolution of the issue." But no consensus could be reached for Asean to get involved, Yeo said in a statement. The dispute is testing Asean's unity while it is in the midst of ratifying a charter that would turn the 41-year-old grouping into an EU-style, rules-based organization. "The border engagement is not only relevant in terms of the problem that we see between the two states, but also it could be a test to Asean," said Malaysian Foreign Minister Rais Yatim. (*Reuters*)