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# Cambodians Are Evacuated in Temple Feud With Thais

By **SETH MYDANS**

THNAL BEK, Cambodia — Refugees clustered around cooking fires at a schoolhouse here as [Cambodia](#) and [Thailand](#) prepared for the possibility of further violence after a fourth day of shelling on Monday at their disputed border.

The Cambodian Army cleared out military vehicles and construction equipment and evacuated villagers from the foot of a steep cliff that is the site of an 11th-century Hindu temple claimed by both sides.

The dispute involves a century-old French colonial map, a ruling by the [International Court of Justice](#) and a decision in 2008 by [Unesco](#), the cultural arm of the [United Nations](#), to list the temple, [Preah Vihear](#), as a [Cambodian World Heritage site](#).

It has become tangled within the complex knot of Thai politics, as well as simmering enmity between the two neighbors that has erupted into violence near the temple several times since the World Heritage listing.

The current fighting is the most sustained engagement between the two nations. As many as a total of five civilians and soldiers have been killed on both sides, according to Thai and Cambodian news reports.

Cambodia urged the United Nations to send [peacekeepers](#) to the border area on Monday, one day after [asking the Security Council](#) to convene an urgent meeting to “stop Thailand’s aggression.”

“We will go to the Security Council whether you like it or not,” Cambodia’s prime minister, [Hun Sen](#), said in a speech on Monday, addressing his counterparts in Thailand. “The armed clash is threatening regional security.”

Thailand has always taken the position that the dispute is a bilateral issue and that there is no need to involve outside organizations.

The Thai Foreign Ministry sent its own message to the Security Council on Monday formally protesting what it called “repeated and unprovoked armed attacks by Cambodian troops.”

Each side has accused the other of initiating the conflict and of shooting first in each exchange of shelling.

“Thai soldiers had no choice but to exercise the inherent right of self-defense,” said Thailand’s prime minister, [Abhisit Vejjajiva](#).

The Cambodian government said Thai shelling had damaged part of the temple, but reporters were barred from the conflict area and the report was impossible to verify.

Late Sunday, the United Nations secretary general, [Ban Ki-moon](#), said in a statement that he was “deeply concerned” by the fighting and urged both sides “to exercise maximum restraint.”

In the dispute, each side offers a different interpretation of a French colonial map drawn up at the beginning of last century.

The temple is most easily accessible on the Thai side. On the Cambodian side, it can be reached only by a narrow road cut into a steep cliff.

In 1962, the International Court of Justice ruled that the temple belonged to Cambodia.