

## URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

**KHM 002 / 0911 / OBS 112**

Threats / Acts of intimidation /  
Obstacle to peaceful assembly

**Cambodia**

September 8, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Cambodia.

### Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) about the acts of intimidation faced by their members and the members of the Natural Resource Protection Group (NRPG) during a human rights training event conducted by both organisations in Mean Rith commune, Sandan district, Kampong Thom Province.

According to the information received, on September 7, 2011, staff members of the CCHR and the NRPG organised a human rights training event for the Mean Rith community members affected by the ongoing deforestation and other land conflicts in the area. Shortly after the venue was prepared, commune and district officials, as well as heavily armed police, intervened to disrupt the training event and threatened both organisation members with arrest if the event proceeded, claiming that the organisations had failed to satisfy notification requirements. However, these requirements do not exist as the Article 3 of the Law on Peaceful Demonstrations exempts organisers of notifying “education dissemination activities for social interests”, including training events. In addition, the organisers had previously informed provincial authorities about the event.

According to the same information, officials and the police took pictures of the participants, the organisers and the observers of the event, including members of the Cambodian League for Promotion and Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO) and the Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC). No one was arrested in the end and the event could eventually proceed after a discussion with a Sandan district council member.

This event occurred one day after the publication of a media report in *The Cambodia Daily* in which Kampong Thom provincial police chief accused CCHR and NRPG of inciting people through the provision of human rights training and threatened both organisations with suspension should further training events be held.

The Observatory expresses its concern about the intimidation faced by human rights organisations within the context of a shrinking space for civil society in Cambodia. Furthermore, the Observatory urges the Cambodian authorities to ensure the protection of human rights defenders and guarantee their right to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

### Actions requested:

Please write to the Cambodian authorities and ask them to:

- i. Put an end to acts of intimidation against members of the CCHR, the NRPG, LICADHO, CLEC and all human rights defenders in Cambodia;

ii. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, and in particular :

Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”,

Article 6 (b) and (c) which states that “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters,

and Article 12.2 which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”.

iii. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Cambodia.

#### Addresses:

- Mr. Hun Sen, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Fax: +855 23 36 06 66 / 855 23 88 06 24 (c/o Council of Ministers), Email: [leewood\\_phu@nida.gov.kh](mailto:leewood_phu@nida.gov.kh)

- Mr. H.E. Ang Vong Vathna, Minister of Justice, No 240, Sothearos Blvd, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Fax: 023 364119. Email: [moj@cambodia.gov.kh](mailto:moj@cambodia.gov.kh)

- Mr. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior, 275 Norodom Blvd, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Fax: + 855 23 212708. Email: [moi@interior.gov.kh](mailto:moi@interior.gov.kh)

- Mr. Hor Nam Hong, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 161 Preah Sisowath Quay, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Fax: + 855 23 21 61 44 / + 855 23 21 69 39. Email: [mfaicasean@bigpond.com.kh](mailto:mfaicasean@bigpond.com.kh)

- Ambassador Mr. Sun Suon, Permanent Mission of Cambodia to the United Nations in Geneva, Chemin de Taverney 3, Case postale 213, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Switzerland, Fax: + 41 22 788 77 74. Email: [cambodge@bluewin.ch](mailto:cambodge@bluewin.ch)

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of Cambodia in your respective countries.

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Geneva-Paris, September 8, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a OMCT and FIDH venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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