

Joint Media Statement

Civil Society Groups Condemn Arrest and Detention of the Boeung Kak Lake Seven

November 12, 2014 - We, the undersigned civil society groups, condemn the arrest, detention, and conviction of the seven Boeung Kak Lake community representatives following protests outside Phnom Penh City Hall on the morning of November 10, 2014.

On Monday, seven representatives from Boeung Kak Lake community were arrested after protesting in front of city hall over alleged deliberate drainage problems under the control of city hall authorities.

Areas near the site of the former lake have suffered from extreme flooding problems after almost 20,000 people were forcefully evicted from the area in 2008. Following the leasing and filling of the former lake by Shukaku Company, owned by Cambodian People's Party (CPP) Senator Lao Meng Khin, flooding around the community has worsened, increasing health risks and causing damage to many homes and businesses in the surrounding community.

The seven Boeung Kak Lake representatives arrested on November 10 include Nget Khun, Tep Vanny, Song Srey Leap, Kong Chantha, Phan Chhunreth – all previously arrested and convicted in 2012 in retaliation for their peaceful activism – as well as Po Chorvy, and Nong Sreng.

“The targeted arrest, conviction and sentencing of the Boeung Kak Lake community representatives won't resolve anything, on the contrary it will further raise international awareness and solidarity for their cause,” said Ee Sarom, Executive Director of Sahnmakum Teang Tnaut (STT). “The government needs to realize that citizens' grievances raised through peaceful protests have to be addressed.”

After being detained overnight at the Phnom Penh traffic police headquarters, the seven representatives were taken to the Phnom Penh Court of the First Instance on the morning of November 11, where they were interviewed by prosecutor Seang Sok. Following the interviews, the prosecutor charged each representative with obstructing public traffic (Article 78 of the Traffic Law).

Following the interviews, Seang Sok ordered the accused to appear immediately before the Court of First Instance without any investigation. The trial led by presiding judge Mong Mony Sophear began at 3:30pm on November 11, less than five hours after the seven representatives were interviewed and charged by the prosecutor. By 6pm, all seven representatives were convicted and received a maximum sentence of one year in prison and a US\$500 fine each.

“This once again demonstrates how the judicial system continues to be abused in order to intimidate activists with a complete lack of accountability,” said Naly Pilorge, Director at the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO). “The arrest of all seven representatives today is extremely worrying, especially when taking into account the fact that five of them were previously jailed for peaceful activism.”

The following civil society groups agree to support this statement:

1. *Banteay Srey Community (BS)*
2. *Boeung Kak Lake Community (BKL)*
3. *Borei Keila Community (BK)*
4. *Building Community Voices (BCV)*
5. *Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC)*
6. *Cambodia's Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA)*
7. *Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)*
8. *Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)*

9. *Cambodian Committee for Women (CAMBOW)*
10. *Cambodian Food and Service Worker Federation (CFSWF)*
11. *Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)*
12. *Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)*
13. *Cambodian Independent Teachers Association (CITA)*
14. *Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC)*
15. *Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)*
16. *Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)*
17. *Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)*
18. *Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Domestic Unions (C.CAWDU)*
19. *Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC)*
20. *Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC)*
21. *Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)*
22. *Equitable Cambodia (EC)*
23. *Farmers Association for Peace and Development (FAPD)*
24. *Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)*
25. *Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF)*
26. *Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)*
27. *Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NICFEC)*
28. *Sahmakum Teang Thaut (STT)*
29. *Thmor Kol Community (TK)*
30. *The NGO Forum on Cambodia*

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