

Joint Statement
On
The Concerns about Ongoing Arrests of Political Activists

We, the undersigned Cambodian Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions and Communities, would like to express our grave concerns over the arrest of former political activists, specifically of former members of the Cambodian National Rescue Party.

Recently, arrests of former members of the opposition party who have expressed their views on social media have been ongoing. The arrested political activists are charged with being accomplices to treason against the State under Article 439 of the Cambodian Criminal Code, incitement to commit a felony under Article 495 of the same code and incitement to the disobedience of soldiers under Article 471 of the code. These charges violate the freedom of expression and political rights protected under the Cambodian Constitution and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR).

Article 51 of the Cambodian Constitution reads: *"The Cambodian people are the masters of their own country. All power belongs to the people."*

Article 35 of the Cambodian Constitution reads: *"Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to participate actively in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation."*

Article 41 of the Cambodian Constitution reads: *"Khmer citizens shall have freedom of expression, press, publication and assembly."*

To develop the country and to have peace, citizens must be granted freedom of expression and freedom to fully participate in political activities.

As the rest of the world, Cambodia has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which raises major socio-economic and political issues. The Cambodian economy and welfare, along with the country's employment rate are negatively affected by this public health crisis. While the economic impacts emerging from COVID-19 continues, some great concerns have also been raised regarding the current human rights situation in Cambodia.

Thus, in the name of Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions and the Communities, we would like to petition the competent authorities, courts, and relevant institutions to cease the arrests of former members of the opposition party who only exercise their freedom of expression peacefully. These arrests and detentions are not the right approaches to take, instead, they undermine the Cambodian Constitution, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the dignity of the Humanity which can lead to the Cambodian nation being divided.

We, the undersigned Cambodian Civil Society Organizations, Trade Unions and Communities, would like to petition the government and parties to consider the following requests:

1. All politicians from the ruling party, the opposition party and all the relevant stakeholders return to the negotiation table to discuss and find a political solution altogether based on the principles of democracy and the respect of the Constitution for the sake of the citizens and society as a whole.
2. Respect for people's rights, political rights and the freedom of expression of active citizens.
3. Release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.
4. Stop the ongoing arrests and detentions of political activists, specifically former members of the opposition party who only exercise their freedom of expressions peacefully.

Endorsed by:

1. Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)
2. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
3. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
4. Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL)
5. People Center for Development and Peace (PDP-Center)
6. Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
7. Cambodian Confederation of Farmer Communities (CCFC)
8. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
9. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
10. Youth Resource Development Programs (YRDP)
11. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
12. Cambodian Labor Confederation (CLC)
13. Transparency International (TI)
14. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
15. Independent Democracy of Informal Economic Association (IDEA)
16. Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA)
17. Khmer Kampuchea Krom for Human Rights and Development Association (KKKHRA)
18. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
19. Cambodian Center for Protection of Children Rights (CCPCR)
20. Minority Rights Organization (MIRO)
21. Human Rights Organization for Transparency and Peace (HROTP)
22. Cambodia Independent Anti-Corruption Committee (CIACC)
23. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)
24. The Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)
25. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
26. Building Community Voices (BCV)
27. Indradevi Association (IDA)
28. People's Action for Development Organization (PADO)
29. Cambodian Volunteer for Society (CVS)
30. CamAsean Youth Network (CamAsean)