PM accuses Human Rights Watch of double standards

Prime Minister Hun Sen lashed out at Brad Adams of the Human Rights Watch for failing to criticise the United States on their human rights violation and cracking down on protesters.

Speaking during a meeting with civil servants in Preah Sihanouk province on Monday, Mr Hun Sen was confounded that Brad Adams, executive director of the Asian division of Human Rights Watch, is staying silent about human right violations when the United States has used force to arrest protesters to protect public order.

“When Cambodia took measures to stop the demonstrators to maintain public order, they accused Cambodia of violating human rights by depriving the right to freedom of expression of the protesters,” said Mr Hun Sen. “But why is Brad Adams now remaining silent when a democratic country [US] is using force to quell the protesters?”
“All human rights in the world is gone. Why are they silent?” he asked.

“The cracking down on protesters in the United States is a serious issue, and if Brad Adams does not talk about human rights, he is not human,” Mr Hun Sen.

AFP reported about a thousand National Guard soldiers were mobilised on Saturday as violent protests over the death of an unarmed black man during an arrest in Minneapolis erupted across the United States.

Murder charges laid against the officer on Friday failed to silence seething anger as riots against police racism raged from New York to Los Angeles in one of the worst nights of civil unrest in America in years.

Demonstrators ignoring a curfew clashed with police for the fourth straight night in the midwestern city of Minneapolis, where fires burned out of control, looters roamed freely and protesters staged cat-and-mouse clashes with law enforcement.

Minnesota National Guard Major General Jon Jensen told a press conference early Saturday, the state’s governor had authorised the deployment of an extra 1,000 soldiers to help police control the situation.

The state has become the epicentre of violence since George Floyd died in an arrest by an officer who pinned him to the ground for several minutes by kneeling on his neck.

Phil Robertson, Deputy Asia Director of Human Rights Watch said yesterday via email to Prime Minister Hun Sen: “You don’t get a free pass to abuse human rights in Cambodia just because there are also rights problems in the US or elsewhere in the world.”

He said the United States division of Human Rights Watch has already issued statements about the crisis of racism and rights abuses in the USA.

“Brad Adams heads the Asia division, so his job is to raise concerns about rights abuses in Asia, including Cambodia but if the PM wants to arrange a call with him, I’m sure he would be willing to speak to him about all sorts of issues,” Mr Robertson said.

“If Hun Sen is so concerned about human rights in the USA, why doesn’t he call his buddy Donald Trump, who the PM has repeatedly and inexplicably praised in the past?” he asked.

Chin Malin, vice president of the Cambodia Human Rights Committees said yesterday that those organisations have a bias political tendency against the government.

“Those organisations’ criticisms are baseless and do not reflect the factual situation in Cambodia,” he said.
Mr Malin said he has never seen the government cracking down and using violence to restore public order even though national and international civil groups are always attacking and accusing Cambodia of violating human rights.

“They have failed to look at the activity of those people who impact security, social public order and interests of other people,” said Mr Malin. “So we are waiting to see whether they will criticise the US as they did Cambodia,” he said.

Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodia Center for Human Rights yesterday expressed her concern about the current situation in America where lives have been lost both during the protests and throughout history as a consequence systemic racism and discrimination against people of colour.

“These are human rights violations,” she said, adding that CCHR condemns all human rights abuses whether they take place in Cambodia or abroad.

“Each State has a duty to protect the human rights of their citizens and ensure their society does not permit discrimination on the basis of race, colour or any other status,” Ms Sopheap said.

“We call for all violence to stop and for citizens to be protected from torture or cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment,” she said.

She said current events in America should not be used by the government as a political tool to deflect attention away from the human rights situation in Cambodia.