Cambodia: Human rights report ‘fails to look at reasons’

Saturday, 01 Aug 2020
2:04 PM MYT

PHNOM PENH, Aug 1 (The Phnom Penh Post/ANN): The Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) has rejected a report by a group of civil society organisations that claimed the government had severely restricted people’s rights. The report – produced by the Freedoms Monitoring Project (FFMP) – was released by the Solidarity Centre (SC), the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) and Adhoc in a joint press release recently.

Entitled the Fourth Annual Report of the Cambodia Fundamental Freedoms Monitor, the report analysed 1,194 media articles from April 1, last year, to March 31 this year. “The FFMP recorded persistent restrictions to the fundamental freedoms, carried out by national and local authorities, demonstrating a lack of compliance with international human rights law and domestic law,” it said.

CHRC spokesman Chin Malin said the report constituted a danger to society. He said conclusions were made in an incomprehensive, incorrect and unscientific manner and accused the CSOs of protecting environmental and political activists. “They don’t analyse the root causes of all the events to see why the events happen. "As long as police enforce the law on target groups whom they [the CSOs] have to protect, that is a violation of the rights and freedom of citizens," he said. He said that if CSOs continue to release biased reports without clear evidence, social stability will be affected.

Out of the 1,194 analysed media articles, the report stated that there were 537 “media monitoring incidents” and the FFMP also received 119 incident reports. It highlighted continued suppression of political dissent, silencing of speech, arbitrary use of the Criminal
Code of Cambodia and a decrease in the public’s understandings of fundamental freedoms. The report emphasised that accusations of “defamation, plotting, incitement to commit a felony and falsifying information” were on the rise and restricted freedoms. Individual freedoms were called into question on July 8 this year when a group of people attempting to commemorate the fourth anniversary of political activist Kem Ley’s death were disbanded by authorities. A man wearing a T-shirt with Ley’s logo was also apprehended by authorities. Malin said the report seems to encourage certain groups who have historically caused chaos and broke the law in the country. Adhoc spokesman Soeng Sen Karuna said the report was designed for general citizens without an agenda and it wasn’t unusual for the government to deny the accusations. It had done the same in the past with UN reports, he said. The government should use data in this report to solve problems to avoid further human rights violations, he added. Government spokesperson Phay Siphan said the government enforced laws to prevent disorder in society and to protect the environment and economy. “Before, giving opinions created chaos, which we do not want to happen again,” he said. - The Phnom Penh Post/Asian News Network