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CCHR WELCOMES CONSTITUTION DAY AND CALLS FOR CULTURE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) congratulates all Khmer citizens on the occasion of Constitution Day, the seventeenth anniversary of the formal adoption of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. This day marks our transition from the tragedy and tumult of previous decades towards development and democracy. CCHR commends the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) for its ongoing work to educate high school students about the Constitution but calls on the RGC to widen the constitutional curriculum, particularly that which deals with constitutional rights as contained in Articles 31-50.

Between Grades 7 and 12, Cambodian High School social studies students learn about the content of the Constitution; in Grade 7 for example they learn about the legal and administrative systems in place, in Grade 9 about the political system, and in Grade 12 about bedrock constitutional institutions such as the National Assembly, Royal Government, and the Judiciary. These classes are important in ensuring that Cambodians are informed and capable of exercising their rights, as per Article 35 of the Constitution, to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation.

CCHR calls on the RGC to extend the constitutional curriculum, in particular that which is taught in Grade 10 and which deals with Chapter 3 of the Constitution; The Rights and Obligations of Khmer Citizens. Under the current curriculum, students learn about the concept of rights and obligations, freedom of expression, social, economic and cultural rights, and the United Nations framework. While CCHR commends the RGC for including these topics in the curriculum, we call on the RGC to extend the curriculum to include the content of each individual right contained in Articles 31-50 and to move this important module to Grade 12 to ensure its content is fully understood by the students. Knowledge of these rights is essential in order to ensure that Cambodians understand the limits of State power and to ensure that the Cambodia of tomorrow is one with a culture of awareness of the rights and freedoms owed to the people. With a culture of constitutional awareness Cambodia can continue to strive towards becoming an "Island of Peace" based on a multi-party liberal democratic regime guaranteeing human rights and the respect of law.

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