Joint civil society organizations strongly condemn the 3-years-long coercion campaign of Group 78 residents to leave their homes and land, culminating in this morning's final eviction of the area. Over the years, Group 78 families were served with a number of eviction notices by local authorities while witnessing two violent forced eviction that took place in the same area, namely Dey Krahorm and Sambok Chap.

"Today is yet another black day for land rights in Cambodia," said LICADHO director Naly Pilorge. "Once more, some of Phnom Penh's poorest and most vulnerable residents have been forced off their land in return for grossly inadequate compensation."

"The eviction of Group 78 represents another violation of the basic human rights of the people of Cambodia." said Dan Nicholson, COHRE Coordinator. "This eviction will have a broad impact on the lives of those affected: it will make families poorer, jeopardize their physical and mental health, disturb children's education and make families more vulnerable to other violations of their human rights."

At 4 am this morning, dozens of armed police took up positions around Group 78 in order to enforce a municipal order that they dismantle their homes or be forcibly removed. This followed 53 families yesterday “agreeing” to the authorities’ demand that they an offer of $8,000 compensation or their homes would be forcibly destroyed. Negotiations this morning with the remaining 7 families who had not “agreed” led to a final offer to them of up to $20,000 in compensation which they all accepted, except for one family whose home was destroyed against their will.

"The authorities cannot claim that what happened at Group 78 this morning, and over the past months and years, was 'voluntary' on the part of the residents," said Yeng Virak, CLEC Executive Director. "The families of Group 78 were never given any real choice - they were just subjected to a campaign of intimidation and threats by the authorities, which lasted for years, in order to wear them down into submission."

"The cash compensation given to the vast majority of these families is completely inadequate, well below market value," said Ou Virak, CCHR Executive Director. "It's not enough for them to be able to afford to buy a similar piece of land in a comparable location in the inner-city, close to their jobs, schools and other essential services."

"Invariably, the government claims that evictions such as that of Group 78 are necessary for so-called 'development' of the country, but this is not about development for the people - it's development for the rich and powerful," said Naly Pilorge, LICADHO Director.

Civil society organizations welcome yesterday's public statement by the World Bank, Asia Development Bank, United Nations and other donors which called for a moratorium on involuntary evictions.
"We are glad to see that many of Cambodia's key donors now recognize the seriousness of the land situation and the consequences for poverty reduction and economic growth," said Mr. Ou Virak, Executive Director of CCHR. "The international community must continue to urge the government to rectify its disastrous land policies."

This statement is endorsed by:

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