CCHR Media Comment, Phnom Penh, 2 October 2012

Contempt Shown for The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as Andong Community Faces its Second Forced Eviction Without Compensation

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) expresses its grave concerns regarding the forced evictions of nineteen families in Andong village near Phnom Penh, scheduled for 3 October 2012, as was reported in a recent article1 in Open Development Cambodia.

Nor is this the first time that these families have suffered eviction: in 2006, 1,554 families were violently evicted from the Sambok Chab village in Phnom Penh with the use of police and military police forces using electric shock batons, shields, guns and tear gas in forcing families from their homes and arbitrarily resettling them to the relocation site in Andong village – a rural area 25 kilometers from the capital. Government officials failed to honor their promises to the villagers of both comparable replacement land and appropriate compensation, with many villagers now living with no shelter, electricity, running water, public infrastructure, services, or employment opportunities in a site which is prone to flooding in the rainy season. Furthermore, the land on which the villagers’ former homes were located remains vacant and unused, despite its seizure for the purposes of planned commercial development. The villagers have been left in a legal void, with no realistic expectations of obtaining legal title to their land, no legal recourse to remedy their situation, and future generations relegated to extreme poverty. After enduring seven years of misery, 19 of these families are now being evicted once again without compensation.

While CCHR notes that that such evictions to allow for the building of new roads may be in the “public interest” and therefore technically legal under the Land Law 2001, we also note that it is required under this law that fair compensation be paid to the people whose property is seized.

We express deep concern with the failure by the Royal Government of Cambodia (the “RGC”) to observe internationally recognized human rights standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, which states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing and housing.” The RGC is also under an obligation to provide appropriate compensation. Moreover, the RGC has ignored protections affording women and children the right to adequate living conditions and housing under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Arguably, the treatment of these families also contravenes the

1 “Families Face Eviction-Submit City Hall Petition”, 27 September 2012
http://www.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/tag/re-evictions/
Convention Against Torture, as their human dignity and futures have been psychologically and physically affected by such actions.

**Vann Sophath, Co-ordinator of the Land Reform Project:**

“Despite the RGC stated intention to resolve land disputes by securing the Cambodian people’s access to land ownership, and despite promises to implement several recommendations related to land issues made by the Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review in 2009, this forced eviction shows that once again the authorities are failing to honor their promises to provide evictees with appropriate compensation and promised ownership titles. This second eviction of these nineteen families without any compensation illustrates not only their terrible luck but also the total absence of consideration by the authorities for human rights, the law, or the lives of Khmer citizens.”

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Notes to the Editor:

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