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**Cambodian Center for Human Rights**

**CCHR MEDIA COMMENT – 3 January 2013**

**CCHR commends Appeal Court for overturning guilty verdict for Phlong Srey Rann**

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) commends the decision by the Appeal Court on 31 December 2012 to overturn the Phnom Penh Municipal Court’s 2011 guilty verdict for Phlong Srey Rann. Srey Rann, a lesbian, was accused of illegal detention and human trafficking by her girlfriend’s family and sentenced to five years in prison in November 2011 after being convicted on charges of statutory rape. However, it is widely believed that the documents provided by the family claiming that the girl was only 14 years old were falsified and that the family pressed charges because they objected to their daughter being in a same-sex relationship. The Appeal Court overturned the verdict based on a lack of evidence proving that the girl was underage.

The decision by the Appeal Court to overturn the guilty verdict is a positive sign and demonstrates that the Cambodian judiciary can be impartial and independent. Furthermore, this case marks the first time that a Cambodian court has recognized a same-sex relationship. CCHR hopes that this will contribute towards increasing public acceptance of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (“LGBT”) community in Cambodia and towards decreasing discrimination against LGBT people in all sectors of Cambodian society.

**CCHR Project Coordinator Theng Nan comments:**

*“The Appeal Court’s decision is a positive sign, both for the Cambodian judicial system and for the LGBT community in Cambodia. I hope that this decision will send a strong message that same-sex couples in Cambodia deserve recognition and that the Cambodian judicial system will not perpetuate discrimination against the LGBT community.”*

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**Notes to Editor:**

CCHR, founded in November 2002, is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights – primarily civil and political rights – throughout Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the global network for

freedom of expression.

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal [www.sithi.org](http://www.sithi.org) is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms.