



**មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា**  
**Cambodian Center for Human Rights**

**CCHR MEDIA COMMENT – Phnom Penh, 27 January 2013**

**CCHR highlights concerns about increased strikes at garment factories in 2013**

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) is concerned by reports in *The Phnom Penh Post* on 21 January 2013 (‘Strikes in Cambodian factories may hit orders’) that about 10,000 workers have been in an ongoing strike against seven or eight factories since the beginning of 2013 to demand an increase in the minimum wage and an improvement in working conditions. A separate protest also started on 12 January 2013 to demand the reinstatement of five fired factory union leaders, which led to the mass dismissal of about 900 protesting workers. While CCHR naturally supports the right to peaceful assembly – protected under the Article 41 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as by the first fundamental principle (freedom of association) of the International Labor Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work – such events are indicative of a growing tendency by garment factory workers to favor strikes and protests in the absence of an effective redress or complaints mechanism grounded in a strong rule of law.

The Cambodian garment industry has a responsibility to respect human rights under the second “pillar” of the United Nations (“UN”) Framework for Business and Human Rights (the “UN Framework”). However, the increase in strikes by factory workers signals that factories are falling short of this responsibility. Nevertheless, businesses that respect human rights and, in particular, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – which implement the UN Framework and which were unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011 – see significant benefits. Most noteworthy is that a better understanding of human rights by factories will inevitably reduce worker strikes and protests, which will in turn improve their reputations, the stability of their production lines and, ultimately, their profits.

**In response, CCHR Business and Human Rights Project Coordinator, SOK Leang, comments:**

*“As strikes increase dramatically, the time has come for garment factories and the Cambodian government to work together to find a better solution that will not only protect workers’ rights but also bolster the reputation and profitability of the industry. At the moment the industry – and Cambodia’s reputation – are being further tarnished by each incident. It is the duty of the Cambodian government to protect and of the garment factories to respect human rights and ensure that workers have access to effective remedies when human rights violations occur. Since the garment industry is the jewel in Cambodia’s economic crown, the realization of human rights in that industry will have a positive knock-on effect on the Cambodian economy as a whole.”*

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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.