(This is a translation of the official letter which was sent separately to His Excellency Sar Kheng)

Date: 22 April 2013

His Excellency Sar Kheng
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister, Ministry of Interior

**His Excellency please have mercy and intervene in the case regarding threats made by Mr. Tep Nan, the head of the Andong Four village community, directed to Ms. Yong Sophorn; and the Sangkat Kork Raka officer, who refused to receive Ms. Yong Sophorn’s complaints regarding threats directed at her during 25-27 March, 2013.**

On Monday 25 March 2013, a working group from CCHR’s Land Reform Project (“LRP”) visited Andong Four Village, Sangkat Kork Raka, Khan Pur Sen Chey, Phnom Penh, which is located approximately 8 km from Phnom Penh International Airport. Andong Four village is the relocation site for many villagers who were evicted from Sambok Chab village in 2006, and the intention of CCHR’s visit was to conduct interviews and research in order to assess the human rights situation of the evictees. As the team approached Andong Four village, Mr. Vann Sophath, LRP’s project coordinator, received a telephone call from Mr. Yean Nao, a representative of the Sangkat Kork Raka authority. Mr Yean Nao stated that CCHR’s team would not be permitted to interview anyone in the area, saying that CCHR should have requested permission from the authorities first.

After a discussion with the authorities, the CCHR team was finally allowed to visit the community and conduct interviews with the residents.

Two villagers of Andong Four village, Ms. Yong Sophorn and Mr. Horn Sophea, were particularly helpful during this visit, guiding the team and facilitating interviews between the team and the residents.

The day after the visit, CCHR received reports that Mr. Tep Nan had made threats to one of the residents of Andong Four, Ms. Yong Sophorn, allegedly stating – in front of several witnesses that “[he] will split [her] head open”. Worried by these comments, Ms. Yong Sophorn arranged to meet Mr. Tep Nan at 9.30pm that evening in order to question him regarding his threatening behavior and to try and resolve the situation. During this meeting, Mr. Tep Nan is reported to have directed further verbal abuse towards Ms. Yong Sophorn, before using a bamboo stick to try and assault her. CCHR has been informed that the actions and behaviour of Mr. Tep Nan were witnessed by many of the residents at the village, who were reportedly present and witnessed the entire exchange.
On 27 March 2013, Ms. Yong Saphorn submitted a complaint to Mr. Yean Nao, the Sangkat Officer of Kork Raka, regarding Mr. Tep Nan’s threatening behavior. In a meeting with Ms. Yong Saphorn, it is further alleged that Mr. Yean Nao acted disrespectfully and dismissed her written letter of complaint by throwing it down on a chair, before insulting her, using profanities and suggesting that she is a “rebel leader” for allowing CCHR to interview the people of Andong Four village. Finally, he concluded the meeting by telling Ms. Yong Sophorn that “[she] must take care of [herself] from now on”, which she has interpreted as a threat to her life and/or physical safety.

CCHR would like to clarify that the visit by CCHR’s team was not connected in any way with Ms. Yong Sophorn, but was carried out in order to conduct important research relating to the human rights situation of the community since their eviction in 2006.

Any threatening actions on the part of Mr. Tep Nan, along with any refusal by Mr. Yean Nao to accept a legitimate complaint from a resident of his governing authority, would constitute a failure of them to fulfill their obligations as members of local authorities and a violation of the human rights principles that are guaranteed by the Article 31 of Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (“the Constitution”) and international law. Other constitutional rights also rights include the right to freedom of expression and assembly (Article 41 of the Constitution), freedom of movement (Article 40 of the Constitution) and the right to participate in political, economic, social and cultural activities (Article 35 of the Constitution).

I respectfully request the intervention of His Excellency, taking measures to protect the rights to freedom of expression and to show that all people are equal before the law, therefore ensuring the safety of Ms. Yong Sophorn and other residents of the Andong Four community.

Yours sincerely,

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