Communities restricted from travelling to Phnom Penh to deliver Petition to Prime Minister and EU Ambassador

On Thursday, 18 May 2017, communities affected by land rights violations and encroachment by Economic Land Concessions (“ELCs”) from three provinces - Kampong Speu, Oddar Meanchey, and Koh Kong - attempted to travel to Phnom Penh to follow up on a petition submitted on 31 January 2017 to Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union (“EU”) to Cambodia, George Edgar.

The petition urged the Royal Government of Cambodia (“RGC”) to sign and approve a Terms of Reference agreement between Cambodia and the EU, related to the ‘Everything But Arms’ trade deal, in order to ensure an independent assessment of the communities’ land claims related to sugar plantations. Much of the sugar produced on these ELCs is exported to the EU.

However, on 18 May, local authorities in Oral and Thpong districts, Kampong Speu, including the Oral district governor and police forces, prevented 197 villagers from travelling to Phnom Penh as representatives of the wider community. The community members obliged and the four representatives successfully submitted their petitions in Phnom Penh without restriction. In total, 46 community members across Kampong Speu, Oddar Meanchey and Koh Kong were successful in submitting their petition to Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Cambodia.

The actions of the Kampong Speu authorities, in preventing the 197 villagers from travelling to Phnom Penh, constitute a violation of the rights to freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression. These rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is directly applicable under Cambodian law.

For more information, please contact CCHR Advocacy Director Mr Piseth Duch via telephone at +855 (0) 12 71 23 71 or e-mail at duchpiseth@cchrcambodia.org

---

1 Aun Pheap, ‘Kompong Speu Police Stop Petitioners From Reaching Capital’, The Cambodia Daily, 19 May 2017 https://goo.gl/TUe4Cg
2 CCHR received this information from community representatives on 18 May 2017.