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Human Rights, National

Supreme Court Denies Motion to Release Five Environmental Activists

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Environmental activist Yim Leanghy arrives at the Supreme Court to listen to his motion of request to release on March 2, 2026. (CamboJA/Pring Samrang)

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The Supreme Court on Monday ruled against releasing five Mother Nature environmental activists who were convicted of plotting to overthrow the government. Rights groups say that prolonging their detention affects their rights and fundamental freedoms.

A motion from the activists' legal team was heard on February 23 requesting their release from prison pending trial at Appeal Court. However, Supreme Court Judge Saly Theara on Monday upheld the verdict of the Court of Appeal, deciding against releasing Ly Chandaravuth, Phuon Keoreaksmey, Long Kunthea, Thon Ratha, and Yim Leanghy. He did not provide any further explanation for the ruling.

"I cannot accept being detained even for one day. As of now, I have been held for 18 months in prison," Leanghy said outside the courtroom after the verdict.

The activists were sentenced to six to eight years in jail for "plotting" and "insulting the King" after being charged following their arrest in July 2024 when they launched a campaign to protect the environment resources. National and international human rights groups decried the decision, calling it a blow to Cambodia's civil society.

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Pat Reaksmey, Ratha's wife, expressed disappointment that the court continued to detain her husband, noting that keeping them behind bars would impact the image of the government.

"It is unfair that my husband and other activists were imprisoned for protecting the environment," she said.

Licadho operation director Am Sam Ath also expressed regret over the Supreme Court's denial of a motion to release the five.

"Environmental protection is not a crime. They should not be punished for their activism in defending the environment," he said. "This decision may cause fear in other environmental activities or youth to take part in environmental protection efforts and negatively impact the work of activists and civil society groups."

CCHR project coordinator Ros Sarath who attended court, echoed Sam Ath, saying that their efforts to ensure a clean environment and protect natural resources for the benefit of Cambodians would be misunderstood as criminal activities although they expose the state of the environment.

said.

He said that CCHR previously pointed out the significant delay in hearing their appeal trial 19 months since their conviction seriously undermines their right to be tried without undue delay, and right to be presumed innocent.

Licadho បានកត់ត្រាឆ្នាំ 2025 ជាឆ្នាំងងឹតសម្រាប់សេរីភាពនៃការបញ្ចេញមតិ។ យ៉ាងហោចណាស់ការចាប់ខ្លួនចំនួន 82 នាក់ទាក់ទងនឹងសេរីភាពនៃការបញ្ចេញមតិ ដោយមនុស្ស 76 នាក់នៅតែត្រូវបានឃុំខ្លួននៅក្នុងពន្ធនាគារគិតត្រឹមខែធ្នូឆ្នាំមុន។ ពួកគេត្រូវបានចាប់ខ្លួនបន្ទាប់ពីបញ្ចេញមតិរបស់ពួកគេ ភាគច្រើននៅលើប្រព័ន្ធផ្សព្វផ្សាយសង្គម។

2 views

deny, Environment activists, insult king, Mother Nature, motion, plotting