

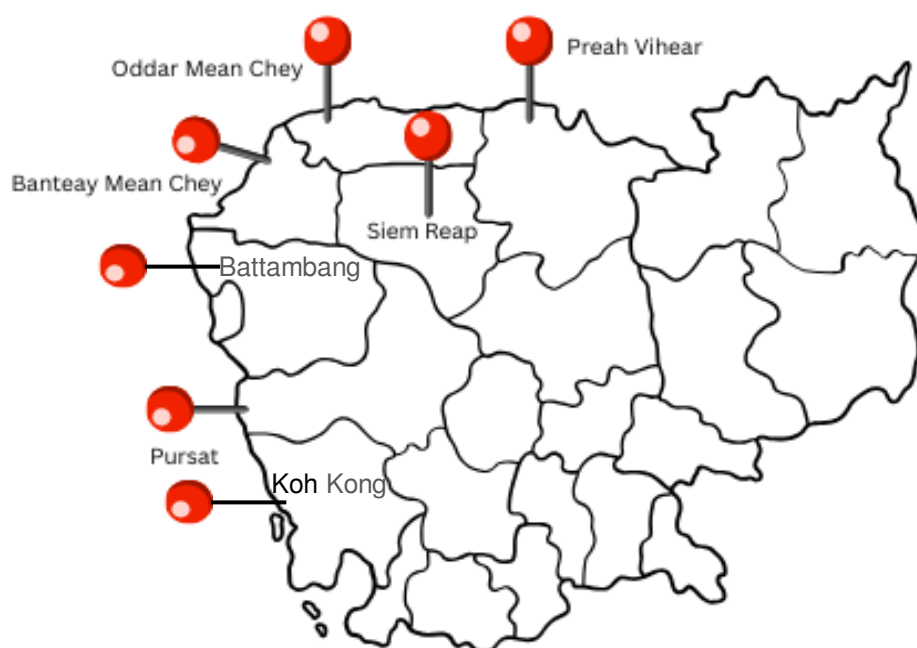
Briefing Note: Displacement from the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict, **December 2025**

Introduction

On 7 December 2025, fighting restarted between Cambodia and Thailand, after months of building tensions since the ceasefire agreement on 28 July. As a result of the fighting, which lasted until a ceasefire was brokered on 27 December 2025, more than half a million Cambodians were displaced.

For thousands of families, this was their second time being displaced in just six months, as many had already been forced to leave their homes during the fighting from 24-28 July. Not only this, but the fighting in December led to more protracted displacement, as even since the ceasefire was agreed, thousands have been unable to return home. As in July, the provinces of Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Pursat and Siem Reap were significantly impacted, however military operations in December also spread to Battambang and Koh Kong provinces too.

In this Briefing Note, CCHR provides an overview of displacement as a result of the renewed fighting in December, the human rights impacts, and the barriers preventing safe return. It also features the perspectives of those who have been displaced for a second time, and highlights the international human rights law and standards related to displacement and the right to an effective remedy for those affected, concluding with recommendations. It is a follow-up to a [Briefing Note](#) released by CCHR in September 2025, which outlined the experiences of those displaced by the fighting in July.



Overview of the displacement situation

The following displacement figures were recorded from 7 December 2025 to 4 March 2026, by a variety of sources, including government ministries, international and national non-governmental organizations and media reporting:

- **14 December 2025:** 403,601 people were displaced
- **18 December 2025:** 498,242 people were displaced
- **21 December 2025:** 518,611 people were displaced
- **25 December 2025:** 644,689 people were displaced
- **31 December 2025:** 517,555 people remained displaced
- **1 January 2026:** 409,149 people remained displaced
- **8 January 2026:** 173,776 people remained displaced
- **15 January 2026:** 141,850 people remained displaced
- **6 February 2026:** 97,878 people remained displaced
- **16 February 2026:** 75,511 people remained displaced
- **27 February 2026:** 50,425 people remained displaced
- **4 March 2026:** 47,714 people remain displaced

The majority of those forced to leave their homes took refuge in displacement sites established by the Cambodian authorities, whilst others stayed with relatives or host communities, and others took shelter in the jungle.

CCHR's [Briefing Note](#) in September featured the experiences of individuals displaced from their homes in Pursat, Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear. At that time, their most salient concerns were: land grabbing by the Thai military, "opportunists" or "powerful"



figures; property damage whilst they are displaced; and toxic emissions from white phosphorus shells, particularly concerning for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and the impact on natural resources. All those individuals who spoke to CCHR were regrettably displaced once again in December 2025. Here is an overview of the challenges they faced and the concerns they had whilst displaced, and continue to have, despite all being eventually able to return to their homes:

- Some were instructed to leave their homes by the authorities, whilst others left of their own accord as a precautionary measure.
- The periods for which they were displaced ranged from **one to two months**.
- Some of those who spoke to CCHR did not take refuge in displacement camps managed by the authorities, but rather in jungle areas, with relatives or in other villages, as they lacked transportation resources to travel from their villages to the camps, which are around 70–80 kilometers away. For this reason, they did not want to be far from their homes and were concerned about the possibility of Thai airstrikes targeting large crowds in the camps.
- All had difficulties in receiving **sufficient supplies**. Those who received supplies from the authorities recalled that they received only a small amount. One individual from Preah Vihear recalled receiving just five packets of noodles, 5kg of rice, four bottles of soy sauce and two bottles of fish sauce. Some also received donations from civil society organizations. One individual who took refuge in the jungle recalled that they did not receive any supplies from the authorities, calling on them to ensure that aid is distributed to all those displaced and that they are supported – not only those in official displacement sites.
- Fortunately, none of the homes of the individuals who spoke to CCHR were damaged as a result of the fighting. One individual shared that five homes in a neighboring area had been damaged by shelling, and that none of the individuals affected had yet received any compensation.
- Their **livelihoods** were also impacted, with one individual sharing that her crops had died as a result of being displaced and therefore being unable to tend to them. This has a significant impact on their income, and for which they are yet to receive any compensation.
- A concern shared by all those who CCHR spoke with, was **land usurpation**. They feared that this could be carried out by the Thai military, or also by opportunists seeking to take advantage of the conflict to encroach on their land and or steal their property. They feared this would leave them landless, homeless, and without access to natural resources, the latter of particular concern for IPs. Loss of rice fields and crops was similarly a significant concern cited by many, both as a source of income but also a means of sustenance. It is notable that these concerns were not only felt whilst these individuals were displaced, but that they are still prescient, even despite the ceasefire. This indicates the precarious circumstances in which many are still living.

- All those who spoke to CCHR expressed an enduring feeling of **insecurity and uncertainty** - not only about the future, but also the **present**. One individual shared that they have not felt safe since the border conflict first began, and that they and their family remain prepared to evacuate their home again for the **third** time, should fighting restart.

Barriers to returning home

Whilst these individuals have fortunately been able to return to their homes, despite the instability they still live with, thousands of Cambodians have still been not been able to return to theirs. By the end of February, data from the Ministry of Information (MoI) indicated that more than 50,000 Cambodians remained displaced, with some organizations estimating that it had reduced to 47,000 by early March.

Several factors have contributed to this protracted displacement, more than 60 days after the ceasefire was signed. Blockades of shipping containers and razor wire installed by the Thai military in areas it claims as Thai territory, have prevented many Cambodians from returning to their homes. For others, the destruction of their homes has made it impossible to return. According to data from by the Ministry of Interior, by the end of February, an estimated 980 homes had been damaged.

At the time of writing, CCHR has not observed any information released publicly regarding restitution or compensation claims procedures for individuals whose homes have been damaged or destroyed during the conflict, or had property damaged or stolen. If such mechanisms have been instituted, information about them and how to access them should be made widely available to the public, and in an accessible manner.

The RGC's initiative to build around 3,000 temporary homes for those who remain displaced in Banteay Meanchey, Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey is a welcome one, for the purposes of providing these individuals with a more durable, safe and secure means of temporary accommodation, particularly ahead of the rainy season. Recently, 203 displaced families in Samrong town and Banteay Ampil district, Oddar Meanchey province, received temporary houses from the RGC, delivered directly by the provincial administration. The lack of social infrastructure and support services have been criticized by some. CCHR urges that they must indeed remain just that – temporary. They must not become a replacement or substitution for damaged or destroyed homes, but a short-term solution whilst



restitution mechanisms, or failing that, compensation measures, may be implemented.

Not only have those displaced been unable to return due to damage or destruction to their homes, but also the significant disruption of services. Schools and hospitals have been closed for prolonged periods, as well as commune offices, police stations, water reservoirs and water treatment facilities, an electricity supply facility and a two cell towers.

Roads and bridges have also been damaged, hindering ease of movement and the pace at which normal life can resume. Reports have [indicated](#) that in some areas, families who initially left displacement sites to return home subsequently needed to relocate back to these sites, due to the disruption of services, property damage and safety constraints.

A further, significant concern preventing return is unexploded ordinance, posing a major safety hazard. Not only that, but until efforts to clear such remnants are fully completed, their presence also presents a sizeable risk to [farmers](#), therefore further impacting their ability to earn their livelihood, already undermined from the two periods of fighting since July 2025.

International law & standards

A fundamental rule of international law is that reparations are to be made for a violation of international law. Specifically, Article 31 of the [Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts \(ARSIWA\)](#) states that “a state responsible for an internationally wrongful act must make full reparation for the injury caused”.¹ According to ARSIWA Article 36: “The state responsible must compensate for financially assessable damage if restitution is not possible”. In addition, International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions & Additional Protocol I), also enshrines the obligation to provide reparation to victims of violations of international humanitarian law. Specifically, the ICRC’S Rule 150 of customary international humanitarian law states that “a State responsible for violations of international humanitarian law is required to make full reparation for the loss or injury caused”.²

As outlined in CCHR’s previous Briefing Note on displacement, international human rights law guarantees the right to an “effective remedy” for a human rights violation suffered. Specifically, this right is guaranteed by Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Cambodia in 1992. One component of an effective remedy is reparations, which may take the form of “restitution” – returning the victim to the position they were in prior to the violation – or if this is not possible, compensation. The foremost piece of international human rights law that outlines State obligations for reparations is the [UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law](#) (“the UN Principles on Remedy & Reparation”). The Principles were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2005. Principle 2, “Scope of the obligation”, provides that:

3. The obligation to respect, ensure respect for and implement international human rights law and international humanitarian law as provided for under the respective bodies of law, includes, inter alia, the duty to:

¹ UN General Assembly, ‘Articles on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts’, (2002), A/RES/56/83, https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft_articles/9_6_2001.pdf

² International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Law: Rule 150 – Reparation, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule150>

*(c) Provide those who claim to be victims of a human rights or humanitarian law violation with equal and effective access to justice, as described below, **irrespective of who may ultimately be the bearer of responsibility for the violation**;*

(d) Provide effective remedies to victims, including reparation³

Furthermore, Principle 9 provides that:

*15. In cases where a person, a legal person, or other entity is found liable for reparation to a victim, such party should provide reparation to the victim **or compensate the State if the State has already provided reparation to the victim.***⁴

Principle 9 further states that:

*16. States should endeavour to establish national programmes for reparation and other assistance to **victims in the event that the parties liable for the harm suffered are unable or unwilling to meet their obligations.***⁵

Therefore, international human rights law provide that a State is obligated to provide reparation to victims of a violation of human rights or humanitarian law, if the responsible actor is unwilling or unable to. In such a case, the State found to be responsible for the violation could compensate the State that provided compensation to the victim, at a later date. It is therefore possible that the RGC may seek reparations from Thailand for damage to civilian homes, property and infrastructure during the conflict. Given the current circumstances however, in which negotiations between the two States are ongoing and may take considerable time, the RGC may consider proceeding with the implementation of reparation mechanisms for victims, and potentially receive compensation for such from Thailand at a later date. It is crucial that civilians impacted by the conflict are not denied their right to an effective remedy and their right to adequate housing, whilst negotiations between the two parties are ongoing, given the lengthy period of time this may take.

Principle 9 further outlines the conditions for compensation, as follows:

20. Compensation should be provided for any economically assessable damage, as appropriate and proportional to the gravity of the violation and the circumstances of each case, resulting from gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law, such as:

- (a) Physical or mental harm;*
- (b) Lost opportunities, including employment, education and social benefits;*
- (c) Material damages and loss of earnings, including loss of earning potential;*

³ UN General Assembly, 'Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law', [A/RES/60/147](#), (2006), Principle 2(3), p.4

⁴ Ibid, Principle 9 (15)

⁵ Ibid, Principle 9(16)

- (d) Moral damage;
- (e) Costs required for legal or expert assistance, medicine and medical services, and psychological and social services.⁶

Where such compensation mechanisms are established, information about accessing them must be made available by the relevant authorities, as provided by Principle 10:

24. States should develop means of informing the general public and, in particular, victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law of the rights and remedies addressed by these Basic Principles and Guidelines and of all available legal, medical, psychological, social, administrative and all other services to which victims may have a right of access.⁷

Regarding reparation for housing and property specifically, Principle 2 of the 2005 [UN Principles on Housing & Property Restitution for Refugees & Displaced Persons](#) (“Pinheiro Principles”) states that: “All refugees and displaced persons have the right to have restored to them any housing, land and/or property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived, or to be compensated for any housing, land and/or property that is factually impossible to restore as determined by an independent, impartial tribunal.” The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing has outlined how such compensation should be effectively delivered:

- **Land:** “Monetary compensation should not replace real compensation in the form of land and common property resources. Thus, where land has been taken, the victim should be compensated with land that is commensurate or better in terms of quality, size and value.”⁸
- **Livelihoods:** “Compensation should be provided for any economically assessable damage. Where the home and land also provide a source of livelihood, compensation must also account for the value of business losses, equipment/inventory, livestock, land, trees/crops and lost/decreased wages/income.”⁹

Recommendations

1. CCHR reiterates its call to the RGC to implement the followings recommendations:

- i. Ensure and facilitate the safe and voluntary return of individuals displaced during the conflict to their homes and land.
- ii. For those who cannot yet safely return to their homes and land, ensure their access to adequate shelter, food, water, healthcare and sanitation facilities whilst they remain displaced.

⁶UN Principles on Remedy & Reparation, Principle 9 (20)

⁷ Ibid, Principle 10 (24)

⁸ UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Balakrishnan Rajagopal - The right to adequate housing during violent conflict’, [A/77/190](#), (2022), §74

⁹ Ibid.

- iii. Swiftly establish restitution and compensation claims procedures for those whose property was damaged or destroyed as a result of the conflict. Ensure that such restitution and compensation claims procedures are made accessible and are implemented without discrimination – with particular attention given to ensure women, indigenous communities, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups can fully access these procedures. Such compensation claims procedures may recognize the responsibility of Thailand, but should not be delayed in their implementation in anticipation of compensation payments by Thailand.
 - iv. Ensure that clear, accessible information about these procedures are disseminated widely, through multiple forms,
 - v. Prevent unlawful land usurpation and in cases where it occurs, ensure victims have swift access to justice.
- 2. CCHR calls on both parties to the border conflict, the RGC and the Royal Thai Government (RTG), to respect each country's sovereignty by committing to peaceful conflict resolution and adherence to international law, thereby ensuring that further displacements do not occur in either country and that displaced persons can safely return to their homes and begin to resume their lives and livelihoods.**

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