The Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) regarded the reports from some civil society organisations (CSOs) and international institutions as biased and baseless in their accusations about the restriction of human rights in Cambodia.

In its February 6 six-page summary on the human rights and law enforcement situation in Cambodia for 2020, the CHRC said the organisations’ reports failed to accurately reflect the situation in Cambodia. It said the reports were just a collection of unconnected events and that they were written with foregone conclusions.

It said these reports did not analyse the cause of those events. Nor did they offer any legal perspective or background on legal procedures and they did not examine the factual basis of the crimes alleged or the elements of the crimes that required those perpetrators to face legal punishment.

“When the authorities enforce the laws against a targeted group who possess a clear agenda – such as former opposition party activists, and opposition CSOs’ activists – it is customary for members of these groups to always draw inferences and make allegations of human rights violations, ignoring all legal aspects and procedures or the facts and acts that are the elements of these offenses that have directly led to legal liability and judicial proceedings,” CHRC’s summary said.
“The release of such incomplete and biased reports which contain targeted attacks on the government may lead to social unrest and instability as these reports appear to be designed to protect and motivate opposition groups who act under various names and are organised and supported by illegal movements and organisations outside Cambodia.

“The measures taken [as a result of these inaccurate reports] by a number of countries and international institutions against Cambodia are biased and unjust and filled with double standards. They are politically motivated and make use of democracy and human rights as a pretext in order to interfere with Cambodia’s internal affairs,” the CHRC said.

Reached by The Post for comment February 7, Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) executive director Chak Sopheap said she regreted that the CHRC report did not accurately reflect the endeavours of CSOs – which she said are the government’s development partners – or their efforts to push for greater respect of human rights in Cambodia.

“It is regrettable. It seems the government does not regard CSOs, especially those working in the human rights sector, as friendly partners. The government always rejects our reports and [in doing so] loses a partner who can help them with their shortcomings,” Sopheap said.

She said the CHRC should follow their mandate and issue reports that reflect the truth about the human rights situation in Cambodia.

“I think the government should consider the recommendations of local and international NGOs, especially those from the international community.

“The International community did not report about the human rights situation in Cambodia based on a single report from the local community, but rather many reports. They also had conversations with the government. We all saw who the targets of strict legal enforcement in 2020 were and they especially were environmental and human rights activists and youths,” she said.

“The government claims that they exercise the rule of law in their measures against activists by saying those activists violated the law. But the question is what crime did those activists commit by caring about the environment and the destruction of natural resources?

“The government should spend more time preventing forest crimes instead. We saw many forest crimes were reported but we did not see any traders or criminals who destroyed the forests brought to justice, instead they brought the activists who exposed these crimes to face the law,” Sopheap said.

CHRC spokesman Chin Malin disagreed. He said on February 7 that the government regretted that some NGOs issued statements that did not reflect the reality of Cambodian society.
Malin said the actions taken did not single out any specific group but were taken against all violators of the law no matter if they were human rights activists, CSOs or political activists. These people are not granted exceptions to the law nor do they have special privileges, he explained.

“Civil society organizations are important partners of the government. But they are too quick to criticise the government and regard the government as their enemy. If we read their reports, we can see whether they are the government’s partners or not. Their criticism is not based on legal grounds and facts,” he said.

Malin said the CHRC had reminded all CSOs, both local and international, who are working in Cambodia to seriously respect the sovereignty and laws that are enforced in Cambodia, especially the Law on Association and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO).

“When they criticise legal measures without looking at the laws, it means that they have a political agenda. They look at our measures for a group or for their group and come to the conclusion that we violated their political rights, or assembly rights. But they won’t accept legal arguments,” Malin said.

Details: https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/chrc-critical-rights-reports