

PUBLIC

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Forced eviction

22 November 2007

CAMBODIA

132 families from Chong Chruoy village

At around 3 am on 2 November 2007, 300 members of the security forces were deployed around the village of Chong Chruoy on the eastern outskirts of Phnom Penh. Within hours they had forcibly evicted the 132 families who had been living there.

Excavators and hired labourers were used to demolish homes and clear the land, which is located on the Mekong river bank. Some properties were reportedly looted during the course of demolition, and human rights activists and journalists were not allowed to monitor the eviction process. An opposition member of parliament who was present at the time had a camera confiscated.

The villagers were forcibly relocated to a resettlement site at Trapeang Anchanh village in Dangkor district where they currently lack adequate shelter, food, and clean water. They were reportedly provided with a plot of land, but not with emergency shelter or basic construction materials. A Deputy Governor of Phnom Penh is reported to have said on 3 November that the families would each receive a five-year interest-free loan so that they could build a house. To date this has not yet happened.

The resettlement site at Trapeang Anchanh, some 20 km from Phnom Penh, has been used to relocate other victims of forced evictions in the last two years. The flood prone area lacks basic infrastructure such as shelter, electricity, clean water, sanitation, medical facilities and schools. The distance from the city also makes it difficult for evictees to retain their livelihoods. So far, the villagers from Chong Chruoy, many of whom lost property and belongings in the eviction, have not been provided with any assistance from the authorities. Local NGOs have provided some emergency assistance, such as food and tents.

Many of the families had been living at Chong Chruoy village, Chruoy Changva commune, Russey Keo district of Phnom Penh since the mid-1990's and had various documents such as ID cards, voter registration and family books to support their residency.

A five day eviction notice was issued by the district authority, which has no authority to do so, on 30 August 2007. That notice reportedly states that the reason for the eviction was "in order to eliminate disorder in the society, to protect environment, sanitation and public health, and to promote the municipality's beauty."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and other international human rights treaties which prohibit forced eviction and related human rights violations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Cambodia has an obligation to stop forced evictions and to protect the population from forced evictions.

Forced evictions are evictions that are carried out without adequate notice, consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation. As the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has clarified, forced evictions are "the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.

The prohibition on forced evictions does not, however, apply to evictions carried out by force in accordance with the law and in conformity with [international human rights law]”.

Forced evictions were recognised by the UN Commission on Human Rights to be a gross violation of a range of human rights including the right to adequate housing, which is protected in Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the forced eviction and destruction of the homes of 132 poor families from Chong Chruoy village at around 3 am on 2 November 2007, and asking the authorities to immediately provide emergency relief, including adequate shelter, food, clean water and medical assistance;
- calling for concrete and targeted steps to ensure they receive adequate reparation, including adequate alternative accommodation and compensation;
- calling on the authorities to end all forced evictions and declare and enforce a moratorium for all mass evictions until legislative and policy measures are in place to ensure that evictions are conducted only in full compliance with international human rights laws and standards.

APPEALS TO:

Kep Chuktema
Governor
Phnom Penh Municipality
#69, Blvd. Preah Monivong
Phnom Penh
Cambodia

Salutation: Dear Governor

Fax: + 855 23 426 101

Email: phnompenh@phnompenh.gov.kh

Sar Kheng
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
No 75 Norodom Blvd
Khan Chamkamon
Phnom Penh
Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 212 708/+ 855 23 726 052

Email: moi@interior.gov.kh

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Cambodia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 January 2008.