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Cambodia rejects recommendations to investigate killings of protesters

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Cambodia

Amnesty International welcomes the recommendations by states in the Working Group on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression,¹ some of which – but not all – Cambodia has accepted. Amnesty International urges the Cambodian authorities to lift all restrictions on peaceful assembly and to end the ban, announced earlier this year, imposed on this fundamental freedom.

Human rights defenders, factory workers, monks, and others in Cambodia continue to face intimidation, harassment, violence, and arbitrary arrest for the exercise of their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Amnesty International urges the authorities to facilitate rather than restrict the exercise of this right, to establish clear legal or regulatory guidance for policing demonstrations, particularly on the use of firearms,² and to end the culture of impunity for violence against citizens by state security forces.

Impunity for human rights violations remains a grave problem. The authorities have not held security forces accountable for the use of excessive force against protesters in recent months, including the killing of at least four people in January 2014, and the disappearance of a 16 year-old boy who was last seen with a gunshot wound to the chest. It is deeply disappointing for the victims of human rights violations that Cambodia has not accepted recommendations to investigate the use of excessive force against protesters and killings during the recent demonstrations and to end impunity for such abuses.³

Cambodia has accepted recommendations on judicial reform,⁴ and has already taken steps to implement these. However, Amnesty International joins others, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, in having grave misgivings with regard to the lack of consultation with civil society and apparent unwillingness to listen to concerns, which may result in deeply flawed reforms which do not guarantee the independence of the judiciary or meet international standards. The organization urges the Cambodian government to reconsider and to hold broad and public consultations with civil society on three laws that are key to maintaining the independence of the judiciary – the Law on the Organization of the Courts, the Law on the Status of Judges and Prosecutors, and the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Supreme Council of Magistracy. In their present form, these laws undermine rather than guarantee judicial independence.

Amnesty International calls on Cambodia to ensure full and effective implementation of all the accepted recommendations, in conformity with the applicable international standards.

Background

¹ A/HRC/26/16: paras 118.20 (Canada); 118.105 (Switzerland); 118.107-118.112 (Colombia, Croatia, New Zealand, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Australia); 119.24 (Portugal); 119.29 (Germany).

² *Ibid*, para 119.29 (Germany).

³ *Ibid*, paras 119.21 (Czech Republic); 119.28 (Spain).

⁴ *Ibid*, paras 118.25 (Portugal); 118.80 (Spain); 118.82-118.91 (Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Chile, Botswana, Kenya, Poland, France, Slovakia, Republic of Korea).

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Cambodia on 26 June 2014 during its 26th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International, in collaboration with the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Cambodia:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA23/004/2013/en/db2be4f5-dccd-4205-986a-d58ddb6c559/asa230042013en.pdf>

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