

URGENT ACTION

CAMBODIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CONVICTED

Two Cambodian women human rights defenders were convicted on baseless charges in separate trials on 26/27 December 2012. Yorm Bopha was sentenced to three years in prison. Tim Sakmony from Borei Keila received a six-month sentence, partially suspended, and has been released.

The trial of **Yorm Bopha** at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court began on 26 December 2012 and concluded on 27 December. Her husband, Luos Sakhorn, and her two brothers were tried at the same time. All four were convicted of “intentional violence with aggravating circumstances” under Article 218 of Cambodia’s Penal Code, and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment and ordered to pay compensation to the alleged victims. Yorm Bopha was returned immediately to Prey Sar prison in Phnom Penh. Her husband’s sentence was suspended and he was allowed to go home; warrants were issued for the arrest of her two brothers who were tried in absentia. Yorm Bopha is appealing against the verdict. She is a prisoner of conscience.

Tim Sakmony, 65, was convicted of making a “false declaration” under Article 633 of the Penal Code in a separate trial on 26 December, and was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, of which she had already spent over three months in pre-trial detention. The remaining three months were suspended. She was released later the same day.

Both women have been prominent in protesting against the forced eviction of their communities. Yorm Bopha was outspoken during the detention of 13 other women activists from Phnom Penh’s Boeung Kak Lake community, who were sentenced for up to two-and-a-half years’ imprisonment in May 2012. Tim Sakmony is one of the representatives of 106 families now living in tents next to the demolished site of the Borei Keila community, also in Phnom Penh. The two women are believed to have been targeted because of their leading roles in peacefully advocating for the right to adequate housing for their communities.

Please write immediately in Khmer, English or your own language:

- Condemning the convictions of women human rights defenders Yorm Bopha and Tim Sakmony on baseless charges;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Yorm Bopha, and for the convictions of both women to be quashed;
- Calling for genuine consultations with the Boeung Kak Lake and Borei Keila communities for a swift resolution to their situations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MARCH 2013 TO:

Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Interior

Sar Kheng

#75 Norodom Blvd.

Khan Chamkarmon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: +855 23 216144

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Phnom Penh Municipality

Kep Chuktema

69 Blvd. Preah Monivong

Khan Daun Penh

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 430 681

Email: info@phnompenh.gov.kh

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation

Hor Nam Hong

No 3 Samdech Hun Sen Street

Sangkat Tonle Bassac

Khan Chamcar Mon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 216141

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 360/12. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA23/020/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thousands of people have been forcibly evicted from their homes on and around Phnom Penh's Boeung Kak Lake since 2007, when the land was leased to a company for development. The residents were harassed and threatened, to make them accept inadequate compensation or relocation to a place far from work opportunities and without basic services and infrastructure. Women were at the forefront of campaigning and protests to remain in their homes. In August 2011, Cambodia's Prime Minister allocated 12.44 hectares of the land for onsite housing for more than 900 families who remained. The Phnom Penh Municipality has excluded 64 families, claiming that their homes do not fall within the designated area. More than 600 families have received land titles, but the area has not yet been demarcated so they do not know where their homes will be located. In May 2012, 13 female protesters were sentenced to up to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment after being arrested at a peaceful protest. They were released in June after their sentences were suspended on appeal.

More than 300 families were forcibly evicted from Borei Keila in central Phnom Penh in January 2012. Some of the families were moved to two relocation sites outside the city, which lacked basic infrastructure including shelter, sanitation, water and electricity. The sites are also far from work opportunities. More than 100 families decided to stay near Borei Keila, living in squalid conditions. They have been protesting for housing promised to them by Phanimex, the company developing the site, which now says that it cannot afford to provide the housing.

The two communities have continued to protest peacefully, sometimes together, despite being under constant surveillance and facing harassment, intimidation and legal action. In 2012 the Cambodian authorities increased their attempts to restrict freedom of expression and prevent peaceful protests, including use of excessive force against protesters.

Name: Yorm Bopha, Tim Sakmony

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 360/12 Index: ASA 23/001/2013 Issue Date: 30 January 2013