

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SENT TO JAIL

Thirteen women representatives from the Boeung Kak Lake community in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, have been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison after a summary trial. The women were arrested on 22 May during a peaceful protest to support 18 local families whose homes had been destroyed in forced evictions.

The 13 women were among a group of protesters who gathered on 22 May where the homes of 18 families had stood before they were destroyed during the forced eviction of the lake area. The police prevented one family from putting up poles where their house used to stand, and the demonstrators went on to sing peacefully and make speeches. Later in the morning, police and district security guards broke up the protest violently, chasing and arresting 13 of the women. They were taken to Phnom Penh Municipal Police Station, where they were held until the morning of 24 May, when they were moved to Phnom Penh Municipal Court and charged.

The women were charged under Article 34/259 of the Land Law (illegal occupancy of public property) and Article 504 of the Penal Code (obstruction of public officials with aggravating circumstances). Their lawyers' request for the case files and evidence, to call witnesses and be granted a delay to prepare, were denied. The trial went ahead and after three hours all the women were sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison; five of them with six months suspended and Nget Khun, 72, with one-and-a-half years suspended. They were taken immediately to CC2 Prison in Phnom Penh. They are: **Chan Navy, Cheng Leap, Heng Mom, Kong Chantha, Nget Khun, Ngoun Kimlang, Pao Saopea, Phan Chan Reth, Soung Samai, Srong Srey Leap, Tep Vanny, Tho Davy, and Toul Srey Pov.**

One woman, **Ly Chanary**, and a male representative **Sao Sarouen**, were arrested outside the court on 24 May on the same charges. They had been ready to appear as defence witnesses. They were questioned by the investigating judge and are in pre-trial detention. A human rights defender and Buddhist monk, Venerable Luon Sovath was also manhandled, bundled into a car and taken away by plain-clothed men. He was held incommunicado for 10 hours at Wat Botum before being released later in the evening.

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

- Demanding that the authorities release immediately and unconditionally the 13 women who have been imprisoned for taking part in a peaceful protest;
- Calling on them to release Sao Sarouen and Ly Chanary, and end the harassment of Venerable Luon Sovath;
- Demanding that they take steps to end the harassment of human rights defenders and allow peaceful protests to take place without fear of arrest or violence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 JULY 2012 TO:

Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Interior

Sar Kheng

#75 Norodom Blvd.

Khan Chamkarmon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 212708

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 insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thousands of people have been forcibly evicted from their homes on and around Boeung Kak Lake in Phnom Penh since 2007, when the land was leased to a company for development. The residents were subjected to harassment and threats to accept inadequate compensation or relocation to a place far from work opportunities and lacking basic services and infrastructure. Women were at the forefront of campaigning and protests to remain in their homes.

In August 2011, the Prime Minister allocated 12.44 hectares of the land for onsite housing for the more than 900 families who remained. In implementing this order, the Phnom Penh Municipality has excluded around 90 families, claiming that their homes do not fall within the designated area. More than 600 families have received land titles, but protests continue for those who have been excluded.

Security forces have used increasing levels of violence against peaceful protesters in recent months. Human rights defenders and land activists are harassed and face imprisonment on spurious charges.

Thousands of people around Cambodia are adversely affected by forced evictions, land grabs and land disputes, many in connection with economic land concessions granted to powerful companies and individuals. Forced evictions are evictions carried out without adequate notice and consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation.

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

Names: Chan Navy, Cheng Leap, Heng Mom, Kong Chantha, Nget Khun, Ngoun Kimlang, Pao Saopea, Phan Chan Reth, Soung Samai, Strong Srey Leap, Tep Vanny, Tho Davy, Toul Srey Pov, Ly Chanary and Sao Sarouen

Gender m/f: All female except for Sao Sarouen, who is male

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