

**AMNESTY
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Item 10

Oral Intervention by Amnesty International in the Inter-active Dialogue
with the Special Rapporteur on *the situation of human rights in Cambodia*

Mr. President,

Amnesty International is concerned by the deteriorating situation of human rights defenders in Cambodia, including land and housing rights activists, and the role of the justice system in restricting their work.

As the Special Rapporteur highlights, “judges continue to use the provisions of the Criminal Code against human rights defenders”. Housing rights activist Yorm Bopha has been in prison since September 2012, convicted on spurious grounds after an unfair trial.

Further, the courts continue to allow impunity for perpetrators of human rights abuses, including against human rights defenders. Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun remain imprisoned as scapegoats for the killing of union leader Chea Vichea in 2004, while the real killers have never been brought to justice.

As noted by the Special Rapporteur, there has been little progress in managing the land crisis, with economic land concessions and urban development leading to forced evictions and land disputes.

Following Cambodia’s recent national election, which the opposition party and others say was marred by irregularities, Cambodia’s political future is unclear. We welcome the public commitments to implement human rights reforms made by both of Cambodia’s main political parties. More and more Cambodians’ are vocally calling for changes, including a justice system that protects their rights. This presents a significant opportunity, which if not adequately met by an incoming government, could lead to instability and unrest.

We recommend that the Special Rapporteur prioritize judicial reform, following the framework set out in his report to the fifteenth session of the Human Rights Council in 2010, and beginning with seeking the release of all of those who have been convicted and imprisoned unfairly, including Yorm Bopha, Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun. The Special Rapporteur should also pursue further with the government necessary reforms related to the land crisis, including ensuring the provision of legal remedy for those displaced.

We recommend the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Cambodia and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia be extended by at least two years, to allow the Office to continue its invaluable work in the promotion and protection of human rights and support for the Special Rapporteur's work.

Amnesty International commends the Special Rapporteur's work since his appointment in March 2009 and looks forward to extension of his mandate to assist Cambodia's government in implementing systematic reforms to improve respect for human rights.

Thank you Mr. President.