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ASEAN and East Asia Summits: An opportunity to address Cambodia's human rights situation

From 18 November 2012 Cambodia will host the 21st ASEAN Summit and 7th East Asia summit in the capital Phnom Penh. Various heads of state will attend, including India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Australia's Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and US President Barack Obama – the first ever visit of a sitting US President to Cambodia.

Amnesty International is urging visiting world leaders to press the Cambodian government on addressing the country's deteriorating human rights situation.

Forced evictions

The crisis over land continues, with forced evictions, land disputes and land grabbing affecting thousands of people and resulting in an increase in protests.

One of the root causes of forced evictions is economic land concessions (ELCs), which the government grants to businesses for industrial agricultural exploitation of land. The government announced a moratorium on such concessions; although there has yet to be adequate implementation.

Crackdown on freedom of expression

Respect for freedom of expression, association and assembly has deteriorated. Particularly in the context of the land crisis, human rights defenders and peaceful protesters have faced escalating violence including killings and legal action through government-controlled courts.

Failing justice system

A politicized justice system effectively grants impunity to perpetrators of human rights abuses, while actively persecuting those who speak out against violations.

No one has been held accountable after security forces shot dead a 14-year old girl during the violent eviction in May 2012 of the community at Kratie province's Pro Ma village. But 71-year-old radio station owner and government critic Mam Sonando was sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of instigating "insurrection" in Pro Ma village. Amnesty International monitored his trial, and found that no evidence was presented that any insurrection occurred, or that Mam Sonando was involved. He is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Further information and spokespeople

An Amnesty International delegation is in Phnom Penh during the summits. Spokespeople are available for interview on Cambodia's human rights situation. For further information please contact:

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