

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN FACE JAIL FOR DEFENDING HOUSING RIGHTS

Two Cambodian women human rights defenders are to be tried on 26 December. They may be facing six months to five years in prison. Yorm Bopha and Tim Sakmony are housing rights activists from two areas in the capital, Phnom Penh. They are prisoners of conscience.

Yorm Bopha was arrested on 4 September 2012 and **Tim Sakmony** the next day, in two separate cases. They are detained in Prey Sar (CC2) prison in Phnom Penh. Their trials are scheduled for 2 pm on 26 December in different rooms of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Yorm Bopha is charged with "intentional violence with aggravating circumstances" under Article 218 of Cambodia's Penal Code. Her husband, Luos Sakhorn, was also arrested and charged, but was released on bail. No date has been set for his trial. They are accused of assaulting a person suspected of stealing car wing mirrors, around a month before their arrest, which they have denied.

Tim Sakmony, a 65-year-old grandmother, is charged with making a "false declaration" under Article 633 of the Penal Code. This stems from a request she made on behalf of her disabled son to Phanimex, the company redeveloping the Borei Keila area in Phnom Penh, for one of the apartments it had promised after the community was forcibly evicted in January 2012.

Both women have been prominent in protesting against the forced evictions of their communities. Yorm Bopha was outspoken during the detention of 13 other Boeung Kak Lake women activists 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. The authorities appear to have leveled baseless charges against the two women 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:

- Demanding the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Yorm Bopha and Tim Sakmony;
- Calling on the authorities to stop using intimidation, legal action and violence against peaceful protesters and human rights defenders;
- Urging the authorities to end forced evictions in Cambodia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JANUARY 2013 TO:

Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Interior

Sar Kheng

#75 Norodom Blvd.

Khan Chamkarmon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: +855 23 216144

Email: ocm@cambodia.gov.kh

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Phnom Penh Municipality

Kep Chuktema

69 Blvd. Preah Monivong

Khan Daun Penh

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 724 126

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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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 women 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. They 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 have increased their attempts to restrict freedom of expression and prevent peaceful protests, including the use of excessive force against protesters.

Name: Yorm Bopha; Tim Sakmony
Gender m/f: Both female

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