

JOINT STATEMENT

CSOs express serious concern and call for a stop to the ongoing judicial harassment of former Cambodia National Rescue Party members

Phnom Penh, 1 June 2019 - We, the undersigned civil society groups, express serious concern regarding the recent and ongoing judicial harassment of former Cambodia National Rescue Party (“CNRP”) elected officials and members through baseless arrests, summonses, and detentions across multiple provinces. We urge the Royal Government of Cambodia to immediately cease the harassment of members of the political opposition and instead take concrete measures to restore civic space and enable all individuals to exercise their rights to free expression, association, assembly and political participation.

In recent weeks, an unprecedented number of legal actions have been taken against former CNRP members in Battambang, Kampong Thom, Kandal, Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang and Tbong Khmum provinces. At least 140 former CNRP members and activists have reportedly received summonses to appear for questioning by provincial courts or have been questioned by local police. The majority of these summonses provide no basis apart from vague allegations that these individuals violated a widely criticised November 2017 Supreme Court decision, which dissolved the CNRP and banned 118 senior CNRP officials from political activities for five years. None of the former CNRP members recently summonsed by the courts are included in this ban.

Additionally, Kong Mas, a former CNRP member from Svay Rieng province, was arrested and sent to pre-trial detention on charges of “Insult” and “Incitement to commit a felony” (Articles 502 and 495 of the Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia) in relation to posts he made on Facebook. His request to be released on bail was denied in May 2019 by the Supreme Court. In March 2019, eight senior former CNRP members who live in exile were issued arrest warrants for alleged “Plotting” and “Incitement to commit a felony” (Articles 453, 494 and 495 of the Criminal Code) purportedly connected to meetings they attended overseas in January 2019. In April, Tith Rorn, the son of a former CNRP commune councillor, was arrested and jailed in Kampong Cham on a 2010 misdemeanour conviction. Despite the fact that the statute of limitations on the conviction had already passed, Rorn was imprisoned and found dead within 72 hours of his arrest, with visible bruises over his body.

The recent surge in legal actions taken against former CNRP members illustrates the serious and systematic misuse of laws to target, intimidate and harass individuals for merely exercising their fundamental freedoms. Other Cambodian citizens raising dissenting voices are similarly being silenced and deprived of their right to free expression, increasingly so on social media and online platforms. They are threatened, intimidated or face criminal charges for any dissent expressed, including through the use of the lèse-majesté provision of the Criminal Code introduced over one year ago.

These violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms have run parallel with a severe crackdown against civil society organisations and independent media outlets. The deterioration of the human rights situation prompted the European Union (“EU”) Commission in February 2019 to launch

a formal procedure that could lead to the temporary suspension of Cambodia's access to the Everything But Arms (“EBA”) trade scheme. The EU highlighted political rights, judicial repression of the opposition, shrinking civil society space, longstanding labour rights issues, and concerns over Economic Land Concessions as major causes for concern.

We urge the Royal Government of Cambodia to stop the legal harassment of members of the political opposition and other individuals exercising their fundamental rights, and to conduct thorough and independent investigations into any cases of physical violence. This must be accompanied by concrete measures to restore political and civic space, ensure respect for the human rights of all Cambodians, and foster a free and enabling environment for civil society.

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This joint-statement is endorsed by:

1. *Angdoung Kanthuo (Battambang)*
2. *Areng Indigenous Community (Koh Kong)*
3. *ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)*
4. *Asia Democracy Network*
5. *Asian Forum for Human Rights & Development (Forum Asia)*
6. *Boeng Chhuk Community (Phnom Penh)*
7. *Boeung Pram Community (Battambang)*
8. *Bos Sa Am Community (Battambang)*
9. *Building Community Voices (BCV)*
10. *C I 5 Community (Preah Sihanouk)*
11. *Cambodia’s Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA)*
12. *Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)*
13. *Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)*
14. *Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children Rights (CCPCR)*
15. *Cambodian Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)*
16. *Cambodian Food and Service Workers’ Federation*
17. *Cambodian Independent Teacher Association (CITA)*
18. *Cambodian Informal Economic Workers (CIWA)*
19. *Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)*
20. *Cambodian Monk Youth Network (CMYN)*
21. *Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)*
22. *Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)*
23. *Cheko Community (Phnom Penh)*
24. *Chikor Krom Community (Koh Kong)*
25. *Chikor Leu Land Community (Koh Kong)*
26. *Chorm Kravean Community (Kampong Cham)*
27. *CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation*
28. *Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)*
29. *Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)*
30. *Confederation of Cambodian Worker (CCW)*
31. *Equitable Cambodia (EC)*

32. *Free Trade Union of Workers of Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC)*
33. *Gender and Development Cambodia*
34. *Human Rights Watch (HRW)*
35. *Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)*
36. *Indradevi Association (IDA)*
37. *Khmer Kampuchea Krom for Human Rights and Development Association (KKKHRDA)*
38. *Koh Sralao Fishery Community (Koh Kong)*
39. *Minority Rights Organization (MIRO)*
40. *Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free & Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)*
41. *Orm Laing Community (Kampong Chhnang)*
42. *Phnom Sleuk Community (Battambang)*
43. *Phnom Thnort Community (Kampot)*
44. *Phnom Torteong Community (Kampot)*
45. *Phsar Kandal Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
46. *Phum 22 Community (Phnom Penh)*
47. *Phum 23 Community (Phnom Penh)*
48. *Phum Dei Chhnang Community (Kampong Speu)*
49. *Phum Kdeb Thmor Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
50. *Phum Ou Svay Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
51. *Phum Sela Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
52. *Phum Thnort Community (Kampot)*
53. *Ponlok Khmer (PKH)*
54. *Poy Japan Land Community (Koh Kong)*
55. *Prasak Community (Battambang)*
56. *Prek Ksach Land Community (Koh Kong)*
57. *Prek Takung Community (Phnom Penh)*
58. *Prek Tanou Community (Phnom Penh)*
59. *Prey Chher Ou Kdey (Kampong Thom)*
60. *Prey Peay Fishery Community (Kampot)*
61. *Railway Community (Phnom Penh)*
62. *Somros Koh Sdech Fishery Community (Koh Kong)*
63. *SOS International Airport Community (Phnom Penh)*
64. *South East Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)*
65. *Sre Prang Community (Kampong Cham)*
66. *Svay Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
67. *Ta Noun Land Community (Koh Kong)*
68. *Ta Trai Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)*
69. *The Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)*
70. *Toul Rada Community (Phnom Penh)*
71. *Toul Sangke B Community (Phnom Penh)*
72. *Tumnop II Community (Phnom Penh)*
73. *World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)*