



គណៈកម្មាធិការប្រតិបត្តិកម្ម នៃ អង្គការសហគមន៍ការពារសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា

CAMBODIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION COMMITTEE

ADHOC - CARAM Cambodia - CCPCR - CDP - CHHRA - CKIMHRDA - CSD - CWCC - GENEROUS - HROTP- IDA
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PRESS RELEASE

- *“How can we live without our land? If I lose my land I cannot live,”*
Mr. Ban Yi, 50, Chi Kreang Commune, Siem Reap Province
- *“I am not so angry at the company. What I am really angry at is the legal system, the government and the municipality, including the local authorities like the police.”*
Mr. Chan Vichet, Dey Krahom Community, Phnom Penh
- *“Soldiers and police have guns for protecting people not shooting them,”*
Venerable monk Sovath Loun (whose older brother and nephew were shot during the March 22 crackdown in Chi Kraeng district, Siem Reap Province
- *“We are still in shock. We still feel sickened. We can’t sleep.”*
Mrs. Seoun Sarun, two years after the violent eviction of her community in Burnt Bridge village, Preah Sihanouk

Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), a coalition of 21 NGO members welcomes government development projects. But those development efforts must not negatively affect to people’s lives and livelihoods, but efforts that reduce poverty equitably and do not only benefit private companies and powerful people. Our communities are losing land and natural resources. These are the resources that people have depended on for generations.

Donors and the international community grant hundreds of millions dollars every year to help develop Cambodia, especially to reduce poverty. They say they provide money to build democracy, reduce poverty, protect natural resources, promote health and well-being and education services etc. However we observe that the poor Cambodians’ are getting poorer and poorer and the rich are getting richer and richer.

Ordinary Cambodians affected by “development projects” are wondering how development aid has been used. In addition, they see that much land is being granted to private companies for concessions, or for private financial gain. People’s livelihoods are increasingly affected.

People from around the country have identified the current trends as:

- Increasing natural resource alienation
- Increasing violence against communities
- Increasing use of military to abuse rights
- Increasing intimidation by courts

- Increasing problems from land concessions
- Increasing problems from mining concessions
- Increasing problems from tourist concessions
- Increasing problems from hydro electricity dams

The “*Losing Ground – Forced Eviction and Intimidation in Cambodia*” is a compilation of events related to land issues that had already happened and voices of those who are victimized by these events.

The voices in the report belong to Cambodians who have been or are facing eviction. Most have insisted that their names and photographs be used, believing that openness will bring justice and appropriate solutions.

Such trust is inspiring. We believe it is the springboard for the next stage of Cambodia’s recovery from decades of civil strife, much of which was prolonged or exacerbated by foreign powers.

After hearing the voices of people affected by loss of land and livelihood, we are making four requests to address the plight of those who face the loss of their land and livelihood:

1. all those who (in the following pages) demonstrate their trust in justice should be assured that they are safe to do so;
2. our Land Law should be enforced more rigorously;
3. courts, authorities and the military should serve to protect the people and be held accountable for failures to do so; and
4. Cambodian citizens should be able to participate and receive benefits to a higher degree in the development of our country.

People’s participation is, we believe, necessary for the next stage of re-building Cambodia. We believe our government, like Cambodian citizens, is searching for ways to reach that next stage and that the starting point is finding shared ground through mutually respectful dialogue.

Phnom Penh, September 10, 2009

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