

NGOs Working Group for Human Rights Day, December 10

JOINT STATEMENT

Congratulation of the 61st Anniversary of Human Rights Day

December 10, 1948 – December 10, 2009

On December 10, 2009, the day which marks the 61st Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Cambodian Civil Society in collaboration with other international NGOs have the great pleasure to celebrate this year's Human Rights Day under the main themes: "***We all need freedom of expression and justice***" and "***Embrace diversity and end discrimination***" throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia.

At this occasion, Cambodian Civil Society would also like to express deep appreciations to commemorate heroes around the world, and particularly the Cambodian human rights activists, who have scarified their efforts and lives for the cause and protection of human rights and freedoms so far.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. This Declaration sets out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all men, women, everywhere in the world, are entitled, without any distinction. Since it was adopted, the Declaration has come to be considered as "*a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations*".

Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the objective of this year's celebration is "*to promote discrimination-free societies and a world of equal treatment for all,*" based on the belief that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established 60 years ago the basic premise of international human rights law, yet today the fight against human rights violations and discrimination remains a daily struggle for millions around the globe.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has recognized the Declaration as part of national law, and it clearly stipulates in Article 31 of her 1993 Constitution that: "*The Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognize and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's and children's rights*".

The Civil Society has so far noted that there are a number of positive developments with regards to the respect for and promotion of human rights in the Kingdom while there are also many other serious concerns such as; slow progress of judicial reform and the adoption of the anti-corruption law, impunity, ongoing land grabbing and forced evictions, threat against human rights defenders and the opponents, as well as bans or restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly and the freedom of expression at public areas which are now narrower than before. Furthermore there are ongoing human rights violations, including trafficking in and exploitation of women and children, violations against the indigenous people with regard to their property rights of community lands, discrimination against persons with disabilities from the society and violations of labor

rights in relations to the demand for peaceful assembly or strike as well as the demand for respecting the labor laws, etc.

Therefore, in response to the commitment made by Cambodia to recognize and uphold human rights as stipulated in its Constitution, which is its supreme law, the Civil Society wishes to appeal to the Royal Government of Cambodia, especially to the relevant competent authorities and courts at all levels to take the following suggested measures:

- Open more space for the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly in public places, so as to enhance all activities in public governance for promoting and defending human rights, the rule of law and democracy.
- Take a new development vision by taking into consideration of the happiness and interests of the people and develop step by step, without seriously affect the society and environment.
- Put an end to forced evictions in relation to land disputes by developing a policy for the poor to have opportunity to live in the city and for ensuring an appropriate standard of living of all people including their health care and education.
- Develop a city and economic development plan which takes into account vulnerable populations who live in target areas, because we need development for all, not just only for investors and public authorities.
- Stop using armed forces to settle the problems with the people, but instead strengthen peaceful negotiation capacity and implement the law effectively.
- Stop arresting community people in relation to land disputes, and offer them instead fair and just treatment.
- Urgently create and adopt the Anti-Corruption law and the Access to information law in order to have a fully-functioned rule of law in the country through the strengthening of effective public management and accountability systems before the people.
- Strengthen the independence and impartiality of the courts at all levels to guarantee just and fair trials.
- Promote and respect the rights of laborers through the strengthening of labor conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Review legal principles by clearly defining the terms “sexual discrimination” and take special actions to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the public systems.
- Protect and promote the rights of indigenous people as well as of minorities, who are living in Cambodia, from being discriminated of any forms.
- Put an end to and eliminate all forms of trafficking in and exploitation of women and children by punishing the service buyers or demanders.
- Urge for an effective implementation of the Law on the defense and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Phnom Penh, December 10, 2009

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The Members of NGOs Working Group for Human Rights Day, Dec. 10:

- 1- Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)
- 2- NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGO Forum)
- 3- Cambodia Labour Confederation (CLC)
- 4- Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (CEDAW)
- 5- Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP)
- 6- Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)
- 7- NGO Coalition to Address Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia (COSECAM)
- 8- Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL)
- 9- Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF)
- 10- Neutral and Independent Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NICFEC)
- 11- Advocacy and Policy Institute/NGO Working group on Freedom of Information (API)
- 12- Cambodian Disabled Persons Organization/Disabled NGO network (CDPO)
- 13- Star Kampuchea (STAR)
- 14- Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC)
- 15- NGO Committee on Rights of Children (NGO-CRC)
- 16- Cambodian Committee for Women's Rights (CAMBOW)
- 17- Youth Committee for Unity and Development (YCUD)
- 18- End Child Prostitution Abuses and Trafficking (ECPAT)