

STATEMENT
On
Concerns over the continued restriction of freedom of assembly in Cambodia

Phnom Penh: 31 July 2019

The Cambodian Human Rights & Development Association (ADHOC) is deeply concerned about the continued restriction of freedom of assembly of civil society organizations (CSOs), local communities and political activists.

At the end of 2018 and early 2019, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), notably the Ministry of Interior, expressed its willingness to enhance right to peaceful assembly of CSOs and local communities through the issuance of the notice No. 2006 NSD, on 27 November 2018, calling on local authorities to allow registered CSOs to conduct their fieldwork without the need of a three-day prior notice as requested before. To further show its will to strengthen partnership with CSOs, the Ministry of Interior also launched national partnerships forums between the RGC and CSOs.

Yet, during the first six months of 2019, ADHOC recorded 71 cases related to violations of right to peaceful assembly by local authorities. Among these cases, 41 cases involved restrictions of right to peaceful assembly of local communities, political activists and other civil society organizations while 30 cases related to restrictions of ADHOC's right to peaceful assembly, hindering the implementation of its activities in the field. These restrictions include, but were not limited to, requests for permission from provincial governors or provincial police before conducting activities, monitoring of ADHOC's activities by local police, sometimes dressed in civilian clothes in an attempt to go unnoticed, requests to access agendas and attendance lists of trainings, photographs and intimidation of participants. As an example, various community representatives attending ADHOC's activities were requested to report to local authorities after their attendance of meetings or trainings conducted by CSOs, including ADHOC.

ADHOC recalls that it is a non-profit Organization officially recognized and approved by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk on 10 March 1992, by Samdech Hun Sen on 19 March 1992 and is legally registered with the Ministry of Interior through Prakas No 278 dated 28 March 2000, and the past 26 years working to promote human rights and democracy in Cambodia in compliance with ADHOC's statutes laid down by the Ministry of Interior.

Furthermore, ADHOC recalls that the cases mentioned above constitute serious violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles, the right to peaceful assembly, enshrined in article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Cambodia is a signatory state as well as Article 41 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia guarantying every citizen right to peaceful assembly, press, publication and assembly. This not only affects the notice's value but also shows a lack of real willingness from His Excellency Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior to strengthen partnership and improve collaboration with CSOs.

Therefore, ADHOC calls on the Royal Government of Cambodia, in particular the Ministry of Interior, to intervene and take concrete actions against authorities who do not comply with its notice issued on 27 November 2018 and continue to undermine CSOs' and local communities' right to peaceful assembly.

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