

11 May 2016

Cambodia – Arbitrary arrest and detention of six human rights defenders

On 9 May 2016, six human rights defenders including four land rights activists were arrested as they travelled to a demonstration outside Prey Sar prison in the capital Phnom Penh. All six human rights defenders were released on the same day.

Mr **Ee Sarom** is the Executive Director of the NGO *Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)* where he oversees the organisation's technical and advocacy programs. STT, which is based in Phnom Penh, was established in September 2005 and works with impoverished urban communities on land issues and housing rights. Mr **Thav Kimsan** is a deputy director at *LICADHO* (The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights), a non-governmental organisation that monitors human rights and provides legal representation to victims of human rights abuses. The four land rights activists include Ms **Sor Sorn**, a land activist from the Borei Keila community, and three members of Boeung Kak community – Ms **Song Sreyleap**, Ms **Kong Chantha** and Ms **Bov Sophea**. Both communities have been affected by displacement.

The six defenders were travelling to Prey Sar prison to take part in the first 'Black Monday' demonstration calling for the release of the five human rights defenders who were arbitrarily detained and charged on [2 May 2016](#). The five human rights defenders, who were charged on counts of bribery of a witness, and being accomplices to bribery of a witness, included staff from the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (*ADHOC*), the National Election Committee (NEC) and the United Nation's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) in Cambodia.

On 9 May 2016, [Ee Sarom](#) and [Thav Kimsan](#) were stopped at a police road block located two kilometres from the prison and were held for questioning at Dangkao district police station until approximately 6 pm. Sor Sorn, was arrested shortly after and also taken to Dangkao district police station. Song Sreyleap, Kong Chantha and Bov Sophea were arrested as they left their homes in Boeung Kak to join the demonstration. They were detained at Daun Penh police station and were denied access to a lawyer. Following the arrests, a group gathered outside Dangkao district police station calling for the release of the human rights defenders being detained. During this gathering, police took two international staff members of *LICADHO* into custody and brought them to immigration police, where they were questioned about their work and the demonstration. All eight human rights defenders were released without charge on the same day.

Front Line Defenders is greatly concerned by the arbitrary arrests and detentions against human rights defenders in Cambodia, intended to silence dissenting voices. Front Line Defenders urges the Cambodian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the remaining five human rights defenders still imprisoned in Prey Sar Prison.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cambodia to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release the five human rights defenders detained on 2 May 2016, and drop all charges against them, as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been targeted solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work;
2. Immediately cease all forms of harassment of human rights defenders in Cambodia, as Front Line Defenders believes that their rights are being restricted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Cambodia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.