

19 August 2016

## **Cambodia – Charges against human rights defenders Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea**

On 17 August 2016, human rights defenders Ms. **Tep Vanny** and Ms. **Bov Sophea** were charged with incitement to commit a felony by Phnom Penh Municipal Court, and sent to pre-trial detention in Prey Sar prison, Phnom Penh.

[Tep Vanny](#) and [Bov Sophea](#) are land rights activists and human rights defenders who work to combat corruption in Cambodia. They mobilise communities in Boeung Kak Lake to fight against an eviction order agreed between the Government and a private corporation to carry out development plans, which would include filling 90% of the lake for construction linked to the domestic and foreign tourist industry. Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea are 2 of 13 women human rights defenders (the ‘Boeng Kak 13’) who were charged and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison on [24 May 2012](#) for joining a Boeung Kak Lake protest.

On 17 August 2016, human rights defenders Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea were charged with incitement to commit a felony under Article 495 of Cambodia’s Criminal Code, and sent to pre-trial detention in Prey Sar prison. This followed the decision by the Phnom Penh’s Municipal Court to skip judicial investigation procedures and proceed directly to a trial, which will start on 22 August 2016. If convicted, they face up to two years imprisonment and a fine of up to 4 million riels (€ 880). The same day, Marga Bujosa Segoda, a Spanish academic, was also deported by the Immigration Department after being detained for protesting against the arrest of Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea outside the Daun Penh police station on 16 August 2016.

On 15 August 2016, Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea were arrested by Daun Penh district security guards during the 15th Black Monday demonstration. The campaign began on [9 May 2016](#) to call for the release of 5 imprisoned human rights defenders who were detained on [2 May 2016](#) and for justice for the murder of political analyst and Black Monday supporter Kem Ley on 10 July 2016. Thirty-six people have been arrested since the first Black Monday campaign; however this is the first time protesters have been charged, in a major escalation in police response to the peaceful protests.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the charges against Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea, which it believes to be directly linked to their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights in Cambodia.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cambodia to:**

1. Immediately release, and withdraw the legal action against, **Tep Vanny** and **Bov Sophea** as it is believed that it is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. 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.