

Thousands Celebrating International Human Rights Day across Cambodia



From December 2 until December 10, a series of 35 events across Cambodia will see thousands of people in 17 provinces and Phnom Penh celebrate International Human Rights Day 2016.

Events will largely take place in rural Cambodia, where grassroots groups including communities affected by land conflicts, youth networks, associations, and monks as well as unions and NGOs around the country will hold a series of celebrations under the theme of 'Justice2016'. In Phnom Penh and four of Cambodia's provincial towns – Siem Reap, Battambang, Sisophon and Sihanoukville – larger events will see groups from

surrounding communities coming together to celebrate in solidarity.

Celebrations will include public forums to discuss current human rights issues, theatre performances, petitions to local authorities on local and national human rights concerns, Buddhist religious ceremony with connecting to human rights issues, and marches through provincial districts and towns.

International Human Rights Day will offer an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity, perseverance and celebration of hard-fought human rights. With less than a year to go before commune elections – and as repressive laws are rolled out, dissenting voices silenced, and human rights defenders imprisoned – it is more important than ever to speak out against attacks on human rights. Celebrations this year will see thousands speak on issues such as free and fair elections, land rights, a living wage for workers, a free and fair judiciary and an end to attacks on fundamental freedoms.

'Laws are being used to stifle us, imprison us and silence us,' said Tim Malay, President of Cambodian Youth Network (CYN). 'Youth are the future of Cambodia, and we need a future in which human rights are celebrated and upheld by the powerful as well as the poor.'

Despite a year of consistent attacks on democracy and civil society, the continued use of the judiciary to silence and threaten activists, and the lack of any governmental commitment to uphold land rights and labour rights, activists across Cambodia will continue to protest injustice, demand their rights and call for change.

'We are still losing land, workers are still struggling for a living wage, and when we protest, we are imprisoned', said Song Srey Leap, Boeung Kak Lake community representative. 'We celebrate International Human Rights Day, but we also demand change – we want justice.'

'Workers struggling to survive have been hit by a new Trade Union Law and other harmful laws', said Sar Mora, President of Cambodian Food Service Workers Federation (CFSWF). 'International Human Rights Day is a time to celebrate together, and to challenge laws which affect our lives'.

'Our theme for International Human Rights Day this year is 'Justice2016' because justice is essential for peace and prosperity in Cambodia,' said Am Sam Ath, LICADHO's Monitoring Manager. 'And without an independent judiciary, justice and peace are not possible'.

Friends of December 10th invite all friends and media to attend the IHRD celebrations. Please contact those listed below for more information on IHRD events in the provinces and in Phnom Penh.

- Mr. Am Sam Ath, LICADHO Monitoring Manager, 012 327 770
- Mr. Soeung Saran, Acting Executive Director of Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), 089 666 013
- Mr. Sar Mora, President of Cambodian Food Service Workers Federation (CFSWF), 016 525 781