

## Cambodia: Halt the Judicial Harassment of Tep Vanny

(Bangkok, 23 February 2017) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns today's decision of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court to sentence Tep Vanny to two-and-half years in prison. The decision is another attempt to silence and prevent the peaceful expression of dissent in the country. FORUM-ASIA calls on the Cambodian authorities to halt the ongoing judicial harassment of Tep Vanny and all Cambodian human rights defenders.

Tep Vanny is one of the country's most vocal land rights defenders. She has been in pre-trial detention since 15 August 2016, when she was arrested for taking part in a peaceful vigil to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> week of the 'Black Monday' campaign. After two days in detention, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court charged her with "incitement to commit a felony".

Then, on 19 August, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court charged her with 'intentional violence with aggravating circumstances'. These charges relate to an altogether different incident in March of 2013, when a protest was organised by members of the Boeung Kak Lake community – which Tep Vanny is one of the leaders of – outside of Prime Minister Hun Sen's house. The protesters tried to deliver a petition seeking the release of activist Yorm Bopha when a violent crackdown by security guards left five citizens injured.

Tep Vanny has been sentenced to two-and-half years in prison, plus a fine of about 1,250 USD. She has also been ordered to compensate two members of Daun Penh para-police, who claim she assaulted them, for a total of around 2,250 USD.

The fabricated charges and ongoing arbitrary detention of Tep Vanny are only aimed at silencing her, as well as sending a clear warning to all other dissenting voices in Cambodia, to not denounce rights abuses or injustice in the country. The Government of Cambodia, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), should respect its international human rights obligations, and protect the fundamental freedoms of its people to freely express themselves and peacefully gather without fear of prosecution.

The judicial harassment of Tep Vanny does not end today. Together with Bo Chhorvy, Kong Chantha and Heng Mom, Tep Vanny is also facing a separate trial in relation to a 2011 protest, when members of the Boeung Kak Lake community demanded land for 94 displaced families. The Appeal Court will announce the verdict on 27 February 2017.

### About FORUM-ASIA:

*FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas*

Regional Office: S.P.D Building 3rd Floor, 79/2 Krungthonburi Road, Khlongtong Sai, Khlongsan, Bangkok 10600, Thailand

International Office: Rue de Varembe 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 740 2947 Fax: +41 (0)22 740 2948

Jakarta Office: c/o KontraS - Jalan Kramat 2 no.7, Senen, Jakarta Pusat  
10420 Indonesia +62(0)213919006

Kathmandu Office: c/o INSEC – Syuchatar, Kalanki, Kathmandu, Nepal, +9779(0)14278770

Website: [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org), Email: [info@forum-asia.org](mailto:info@forum-asia.org)

*of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.*

**For further information, please contact:**

- East Asia Programme, [easia@forum-asia.org](mailto:easia@forum-asia.org)