

36th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council



Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia

**Oral Statement Delivered by Ahmed Adam on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Wednesday, 27 September 2017**

Mr. President, FORUM-ASIA notes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia. We support the extension of her mandate and call on her to conduct two official visits to the country before the 2018 elections.

We are concerned at unprecedented increase in attacks and restrictions on civil society, media and the opposition in the aftermath of the commune council elections in June. The government has adopted a series of repressive laws and amendments to existing laws, and in recent months, used its tax system to constrain civil society and media as part of a broader campaign to silence critical voices ahead of next year's general elections.

In July, the Prime Minister ordered investigations into two members of the election monitoring coalition "Situation Room" for failing to register under the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO), and allegedly violating the political neutrality provision of LANGO after they reported that the June commune council elections were not free and fair.¹ Several non-governmental organisations have also been targeted for alleged offenses under the Tax Law. NGOs that fail to comply with all domestic legislation could face dissolution or denial of registration under LANGO.

Concerns over shrinking democratic space ahead of the July 2018 general elections have been further heightened by intensified attacks on the media. On 4 September, the independent newspaper, Cambodia Daily, was forced to cease its operations following an arbitrary order from Cambodia's General Department of Taxation to pay US\$6.3 million in taxes, and several public threats to prosecute the owner of the newspaper.² Similarly, the government has effectively taken control of all domestic broadcast media with orders to close and revoke licenses of several independent radio stations including independent radio station Voice of Democracy as well as Mahanakor Radio and its affiliates.³

This escalation in attacks have added to several outstanding concerns, including the continued detention of land rights defender Tep Vanny, the chilling effect created by the murder of political analyst and social activist Kem Ley, and pending charges against four ADHOC staff and the secretary-general of the National Elections Committee, who were recently released on bail.

The Council should act immediately and call for a reversal of the current deterioration and closely scrutinise the situation ahead of the 2018 general elections.

Thank you.

¹ <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24640>

² <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24672>

³ <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24716>