



**41st Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 6: Adoption of Universal Periodic Review Outcomes of Cambodia**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Rosanna Ocampo
On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Friday, 5 July 2019

Mr President, FORUM-ASIA notes that Cambodia accepted 173 out of 198 recommendations it received in its UPR. We regret that Cambodia did not accept key recommendations on freedoms of expression, assembly and association, in particular the recommendations to remedy the continuing shutdown of civic and democratic space in the country.

Restrictions on democracy and civic space imposed prior to the July 2018 elections still remain in place. Contrary to the government's claims, restrictions on the right to association imposed by the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO) go beyond limitations permissible under any international treaty ratified by Cambodia and are unnecessary for any legitimate purpose. The law gives government authorities sweeping, arbitrary powers to shut down local and foreign organisations without judicial review.¹ Several local and foreign NGOs have been shut-down or de-registered for alleged violations of the law. We regret that Cambodia did not accept recommendations to review LANGO in line with international standards.

Existing legislative measures including the recent introduction of lèse-majesté offences in the Criminal Code, Telecommunications Law, the Trade Union Law adopted in 2016, the Law on Political Parties and recent constitutional amendments risk criminalising legitimate exercise of freedom of expression and dissent. On March 2019, Uon Chhin and Yeang Sothearin, two former Radio Free Asia journalists were charged with espionage under Article 445 of the Criminal Code.² Last month, Rath Rotty Mony, a translator for a sex-trafficking documentary was sentenced for two years for 'incitement to discriminate' for allegedly creating 'fake news' destroying the nation's reputation.³ These laws and policies impose undue, arbitrary restrictions, and have been used to intimidate and harass human rights defenders, civil society, media, and political activists. We are also concerned by recent statements by the Government on the need for an anti-fake news law, and an anti-cybercrime law, which would further limit available spaces for dissent. We call on Cambodia to accept recommendations to reform these legislations to adhere with its international obligations as a first step towards restoration of democracy and civic space.

We call on Cambodia to accept its remaining recommendations, and to create a concrete, timebound action plan in consultation with civil society and all stakeholders. Thank you.

¹ <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=19191>

² <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/reporters-03152019133905.html>

³ <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-court-sentences-rt-fixer-to-two-years-in-prison/4976334.html>