



48th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia

Delivered by Ahmed Adam
On behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
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Madam President, Special Rapporteur,

Human rights situation in Cambodia has deteriorated further over the past year *with deepening repression of democratic space, and civil and political rights and freedoms and intensifying attacks on human rights defenders, journalists, and critics.*

As of August 2021, at least 91 people are in prison for their political views and peaceful activism. These include prominent union leader Rong Chhun and youth activists Sar Kanika and Ton Nimol imprisoned for 20 to 24 months for incitement as well as five activists linked to environmental NGO, Mother Nature – *Long Kunthea, Phuon Keoraksme, Chea Kunthin and Thon Ratha, Alejandro Gonzalez-Davidson* – *sentenced to prison for their environmental activism*, with several of them facing additional charges of plotting to overthrow the government.

Existing laws such as the *Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO)*, the Trade Union Law and the Political Parties Law continue to be used as tools of repression of *civil and political rights*, while the State of Emergency Law and an overly broad COVID19 law *with heavy penalties* introduced in response to the pandemic expand the powers of the government and impose additional restrictions.

Work is underway to introduce new legislation such as draft laws on public order and cybercrime and the sub-decree of the National Internet Gateway that would control all aspects of daily lives and intensify surveillance *and monitoring of online activities of all Cambodians and allow arbitrary censorship of online content.*

We call on the Cambodian government to end its continuing assault on fundamental freedoms and to review all existing and draft legislation in line with international human rights standards.

The Council must, at minimum, mandate additional monitoring and reporting *by the Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR* on the situation including in the context of the upcoming elections *in 2022 and 2023*, to credibly address the chronic human rights situation in Cambodia.

Finally, we urge the Special Rapporteur to ensure a safe space for human rights defenders *and organisations* to meaningfully engage with the mandate and to clearly set out necessary action required to create an environment conducive for free, fair and inclusive elections.

Thank you.