



49th 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 update)

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On behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
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Madam Vice President,

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's update. As long as Cambodia's commitments to democracy and human rights under the Paris Peace Accords more than 30 years ago remain unfulfilled, the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur will continue to be essential.

As Cambodia prepares to hold the next round of *local commune council* elections in June 2022 and national elections in 2023, we are gravely concerned at the increasing systematic restrictions and violations of fundamental freedoms and the obstruction of political opposition by the government.

A raft of restrictive laws including the *Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations* (LANGO), Law on Trade Unions, the Criminal Code, measures to combat COVID-19 pandemic and several other criminal and civil laws continue to be used to target and silence human rights defenders, journalists, trade unionists and environmental activists with politically motivated charges, and to shut down media and civil society. The disruption of peaceful assembly and labour strikes of casino workers and arrest of activists and labour leaders on charges of incitement is just one recent illustration of the government's intolerance of dissent and critical voices.

The government has systematically dismantled all forms of political opposition that could effectively challenge its single-party rule with the use of laws such as the Law on Political Parties and harassment and persecution of opposition politicians and activists.

We call on Cambodia to remove all existing restrictions on civil and political space as a first step towards creating minimum conditions for credible elections.

At this critical juncture, the Council must continue to monitor the situation and respond appropriately to prevent further escalation of violations.

Thank you.