

24th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity Building - Interactive Dialogue with the
Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia, Mr. Surya Subedi

Oral Statement Delivered by Ms. Pooja Patel on Behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Tuesday, 24 September 2013

Thank you Mr. President. FORUM-ASIA, with its member organizations in Cambodia ADHOC and LICADHO, appreciate the report of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/24/36), which takes stock of the implementation of recommendations made in his previous reports to this Council.

Mr. Subedi, we echo your call for the right to freedom of expression to be respected at all times, including before, during and after elections. In July, extensive restrictions were imposed in the run-up to the national elections, including a temporary ban on all broadcasting stations from airing reports, polls, surveys and election results from foreign media for five days prior to the elections. The mainstream media remains monopolized by and heavily biased towards the ruling Cambodian People's Party.¹ Meanwhile, the allegations of electoral irregularities, including the manipulation of voter lists and fraudulent voting, have put the integrity of the National Election Committee as well as the results of the elections to serious question. This has led to widespread public protests that have been met by excessive use of force, including the use of live ammunition on day one of a three-day protest in Phnom Penh on 15 September 2013 resulting in at least one death and a dozen injuries mostly from bullet wounds. We condemn this indiscriminate use of force by the security forces and stress the call by the Cambodian civil society groups for a prompt, independent and full investigation into the incident.² The government must ensure full accountability and provide redress to the victims and their families. We also call for the continued attention of the Special Rapporteur and of this Council to the post-elections developments in Cambodia.

Mr. Subedi, we remain deeply disturbed by the numerous other violations of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, especially in the context of land disputes. In 2013, several demonstrations by affected communities have been violently dispersed, including with the use of high pressure water cannons and beatings, resulting in serious injuries to protestors. We time and again call on the Cambodian government to ensure that human rights defenders carry out their legitimate work without intimidation and harassment.

Finally, FORUM-ASIA expresses concern over the government's attempts to restrict freedom of expression on the Internet, including through the secretive drafting of an Anti-Cyber Crime Law.³ If introduced, this law, together with the still impending draft Law on Associations and NGOs,⁴ which the government has committed to delay only until 2014, would foreseeably place even tighter constraints to the situation of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association in the country. We urge the Cambodian government to indefinitely abandon these draft laws. Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. Subedi.

¹ FORUM-ASIA, Press Release, "[Cambodia: Integrity of Election Results in Question, Right to Challenge Results Must Be Respected](#)", 31 July 2013

² Joint Statement by Cambodian Civil Society Organizations, "[Indiscriminate Police Brutality and Death amid Mass Post-Election Protest Condemned by Civil Society](#)", 16 September 2013

³ LICADHO, Press Release, "[New Circular Aims to Shut Down Internet Cafes in Cambodia](#)", 13 December 2012

⁴ FORUM-ASIA, Oral Statement, 18th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, [Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building - Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia](#), 28 September 2011