

Joint Statement: Tep Vanny Convicted Again as Para-Police Attack Supporters

Phnom Penh, February 2017

We, the undersigned civil society groups, condemn today's unjust conviction and sentencing of Tep Vanny and the latest outrageous violence perpetrated by para-police against her supporters outside Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Land activist and Boeung Kak Lake community representative Tep Vanny was convicted this morning of intentional violence with aggravating circumstances and sentenced to two years and six months' imprisonment in relation to a protest which took place in 2013. She was also ordered to pay a fine of five million riel (about US\$1,250), as well as compensation payments of four million riel (about US\$1,000) to the first plaintiff and five million riel to the second plaintiff, both of whom are members of Daun Penh para-police. No evidence was provided to substantiate these compensation claims.

During her trial, which resumed this morning after nearly three weeks' postponement, no credible evidence was presented either to justify the charges brought against Vanny or to prove that any violence whatsoever was committed against the para-police. The protest in question ended in a severely violent crackdown by police, military police and para-police against the community, leaving five individuals injured, including some with broken bones. Neither plaintiff, nor any prosecution witnesses, gave live testimony at either of Vanny's two hearings, preventing cross-examination. Instead, the court clerk read out virtually identical statements claimed to be written by the plaintiffs and prosecution witnesses. Nevertheless, after a short deliberation Trial Judge Long Kes Phearum handed down the conviction and prison sentence. After the verdict, anti-demonstration police entered the court building and attempted to physically restrain a number of Boeung Kak Lake women who had appeared as defence witnesses.

Vanny's case is just one of three historic cases which were re-activated in August 2016 while she was awaiting trial on separate charges relating to a Black Monday protest. Since her arrest on 15 August 2016, she has spent 192 days in detention.

"Authorities are once again punishing Vanny for her activism to send a clear message to any who dare criticize the government that dissent is not tolerated in Cambodia," said Naly Pilorge, LICADHO's Deputy Director of Advocacy.

Throughout proceedings, from about 8.30 this morning, around 60 people gathered outside the court in support of Tep Vanny. At about 9.30am, 7 Makara district para-police violently dispersed a group of about 35 women and children from land communities across Phnom Penh who were sitting peacefully outside the court. Para-police tried to forcibly drag the supporters away from the court. When they resisted the violent removal, para-police attacked them and dragged them across the floor, injuring three women – two women from Boeung Kak Lake community and a woman from Borei Keila community.

During the violent dispersal, while a number of people shouted at the para-police to stop the violence against the women, Mao Socheat – a CNRP commune council candidate standing in the

upcoming commune elections in June – was singled out, and a group of about eight para-police chased him while talking into their walkie-talkies into City Mall opposite the court. The para-police surrounded him and kicked and punched him repeatedly in the face and head in plain sight of shocked shoppers. Community members intervened to protect him. Para-police forced demonstrators into the mall, and locked a number of people inside.

“Again and again, we are injured on the streets by para-police, and yet Vanny is the one falsely described as violent and sent to prison,” said Song Sreyleap, who was among those injured by para-police today. “The justice system is totally incapable of providing justice for the people.”

We reiterate our condemnation of Tep Vanny’s baseless conviction, and demand that the perpetrators of today’s violence are brought swiftly to justice.

This joint statement is endorsed by:

1. 92 Community
2. Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)
3. Banteay Srey Community
4. Beung Pram Land Community
5. Boeung Chhouk Community
6. Boeung Kak Community
7. Boeung Sralao Community
8. Boeung Trabek Community
9. Borei Keila Community
10. Buddhism for Peace Organization (BPO)
11. CamASEAN Youth
12. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)
13. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
14. Cambodian Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)
15. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
16. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
17. Cambodian Independent Civil-Servants Association (CICA)
18. Cambodian Independent Teachers Association (CITA)
19. Cambodian Informal Economic Workers Association (CIWA)
20. Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
21. Cambodian Tourism and Service Workers Federation (CTSWF)
22. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
23. Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
24. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
25. Chey Chomnas Community
26. Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC)
27. Collective Union of Movement of Workers (CUMW)
28. Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL)
29. Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)
30. Community Network in Action (CNA)
31. Equitable Cambodia(EC)
32. Farmer Association for Peace and Development (FAPD)
33. Focus on the Global South
34. Former Boeung Kak Women Network Community

35. *Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)*
36. *Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF)*
37. *Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)*
38. *Indigenous Youth at Brome Commune, Preah Vihear Province*
39. *Land Community, I Village Preah Sihanouk Province*
40. *Land Community, Prek Chik Village, Koh Kong Province*
41. *Lor Peang Community*
42. *Mother Nature (MN)*
43. *Peace Bridges Organization (PBO)*
44. *Phnom Bat Community*
45. *Phum 21 Community*
46. *Phum 22 Community*
47. *Phum 23 Community*
48. *Ponlok Khmer*
49. *Prey Lang Community*
50. *Preah Vihear Indigenous Community Network*
51. *Railway Community*
52. *Samaky 4 Community*
53. *Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)*
54. *SOS International Airport Community*
55. *Strey Khmer*
56. *Thmor Kol Community (TK)*
57. *Toul Rada Community*
58. *Toul Sangke B Community*
59. *Trapaing Anhchanh Thmey Community*
60. *Tumnop II Community*
61. *Youth Resource Development Program*