

## **Cambodia – Time to release Tep Vanny after one year of being unrightfully detained**

(Bangkok, 15 August 2017) – The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) strongly condemns the detention of the Cambodian human rights activist Tep Vanny, who completes one year in jail today. Tep Vanny, who participated in a peaceful protest in 2013, was sentenced to two-and-a-half years' in prison by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on charges of 'intentional violence with aggravating circumstances' under article 218 of the Cambodian Criminal Code. FORUM-ASIA demands that the Cambodian authorities immediately release Tep Vanny and drop all charges against her.

Tep Vanny is one of Cambodia's most outspoken land rights activists. She was arrested on 15 August 2016, and held in CC2 Prey Sar prison facility, because of her involvement in the 15th 'Black Monday' campaign calling for the release of the 'Freeth5KH' detainees. Two days after she was detained, she was charged with 'incitement to commit a felony' by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. On 22 August 2016, she, together with colleague Bov Sophea, was convicted and sentenced to six days in prison for 'insulting a public official', under Article 502 of the Cambodian Criminal Code. Based on days spent in pre-trial detention, Bov Sophea was released; however, the same was not true for Tep Vanny.

Since having been arrested, she had also been charged with 'intentional violence with aggravating circumstances' on 19 August 2016 and was therefore sent to pre-trial detention once more. On 23 February 2017, she was sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment in connection with the 2013 peaceful protest of Boeung Kak Lake activists, in which protesters called for the release of a detained fellow community member.

On 8 August 2017, the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence, even though during her appeal hearing on 27 July no plaintiffs were present, preventing cross-examination and – as in the first instance trial in February – no credible evidence was presented by the prosecution.

The fabricated charges against Tep Vanny and her arbitrary detention are politically motivated attempts to silence and restrict her activism as a human rights defender. The trial itself did not meet international standards for a fair trial. The Cambodian authorities should respect the country's international human rights obligations.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Cambodian Government for Tep Vanny to be immediately and unconditionally released, to guarantee a safe environment for peaceful assembly, and to allow human rights defenders to exercise their fundamental freedoms.

**About FORUM-ASIA:**

*FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratization.*

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