

JOINT STATEMENT: Civil Society Groups Call for the Release of Tep Vanny

Phnom Penh, 15 August 2018 - Land activist and human rights defender Tep Vanny has been unjustly detained for two years as of today, for defending the rights of the Boeung Kak Lake community and her fellow Cambodians. We, the undersigned civil society organisations and communities, condemn her ongoing imprisonment and call on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Tep Vanny, drop all dormant criminal charges and overturn any convictions against her, so that she may return to her family and community.

Tep Vanny has fought tirelessly to protect the rights of members of her community following their forced eviction from their homes on Boeung Kak Lake, Phnom Penh, but also those of fellow human rights defenders campaigning for separate causes. As long as she is behind bars, Tep Vanny is prevented from carrying out her peaceful and valuable work.

“We have to share all the benefits of our experience. If we stand up together, we can get justice,” said Tep Vanny. “If the communities join together, we have big power.”

It was during one such peaceful protest that Tep Vanny was arrested on 15 August 2016, challenging the arbitrary detention of four human rights defenders and one election official. On 22 August 2016, she was convicted of ‘insulting a public official’, and sentenced to six days in prison. However, instead of releasing her based on time served, the authorities reactivated dormant charges dating back to a 2013 peaceful protest, later sentencing her to two and half years of imprisonment and a fine of 14 million riels (around \$3,500). To date, Tep Vanny’s requests for pardon or early release have all been rejected. Her many trials and appeals have fallen far short of fair trial standards, with the evidence presented failing to meet the burden of proof required to sustain a conviction.

“As a victim of eviction I can guarantee that Tep Vanny did not use any violence or do anything wrong. I would stake my life on that,” said fellow Boeung Kak Lake activist Bov Chhorvy. “The authorities should release her so she can be with her family. Her children and mother need her.”

Her excessively lengthy detention, apart from taking a personal toll, further deprives her two children of a normal childhood, since they only see their mother once a month. Tep Vanny’s mother’s deteriorating health is aggravated by the ongoing unjust treatment of her daughter. The inability to care for her family places an acute psychological burden on Tep Vanny, exacerbated by her detention in one of Cambodia’s worst prisons, where she shares a cell with more than 150 other detainees in squalid conditions. Civil society representatives as well as members of the Boeung Kak Lake community have been frequently turned away when attempting to visit her in prison, further compounding the isolation from friends and family and in violation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

We call on the Cambodian authorities to release Tep Vanny immediately and unconditionally, drop all charges and end all criminal investigations against her. This will ensure that she is able to continue her work as a human rights defender, and more importantly reunite with her family and community. Finally, we urge the authorities to cease the intimidation and harassment of Tep Vanny and all other activists through arrests, prosecution and imprisonment.

This statement is endorsed by:

1. 24 Families Community (Preah Sihanouk)
2. 92 Community (Phnom Penh)

3. 105 Community (Phnom Penh)
4. 297 Land Community (Koh Kong)
5. Activities for Environment Community (AEC)
6. Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)
7. Amnesty International (AI)
8. Angdoug Community (Preah Sihanouk)
9. Angdoug Kanthuot (Battambang)
10. Angdoug Trabek Land Community (Svay Rieng)
11. Anlong Run Community (Battambang)
12. Ansoung Sork Community (Battambang)
13. Areng Indigenous Community (Koh Kong)
14. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
15. Asian Democracy Network (ADN)
16. Asian Forum for Human Rights & Development (Forum Asia)
17. Banteay Srey Community (Phnom Penh)
18. Bat Khteah Community (Preah Sihanouk)
19. Boeng Chhuk Community (Phnom Penh)
20. Boeung Pram Community (Battambang)
21. Borei Keila Community (Phnom Penh)
22. Borei Mittepheap Community (Banteay Meanchey)
23. Borei Sontepheap Community (Phnom Penh)
24. Bos Sa Am Community (Battambang)
25. Bou Japan Land Community (Koh Kong)
26. Buddhism for Peace Organization (BPO)
27. CamASEAN Youth's Future (CamASEAN)
28. Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)
29. Cambodia's Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA)
30. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
31. Cambodian Domestic Workers Network (CDWN)
32. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
33. Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA)
34. Cambodian Informal Economy Workers Association (CIWA)
35. Cambodian Labor Confederation (CLC)
36. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
37. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
38. Capacity Community Development Organization (CCD)
39. Chek Meas Land Community (Svay Rieng)
40. Cheko Community (Phnom Penh)
41. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
42. Cheung Wat Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
43. Chikor Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong)
44. Chikor Leu Land Community (Koh Kong)
45. Chirou Ti Pi Community (Tbong Khmum)
46. Chhub Community (Tbong Khmum)
47. Chorm Kravean Community (Kampong Cham)
48. C I 5 Community (Preah Sihanouk)
49. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
50. Civil Rights Defenders (CRD)
51. Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union (C.CAWDU)
52. Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community Association (CCFC)
53. Coalition of Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)
54. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
55. Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)
56. Confederation of Cambodian Worker (CCW)
57. Dok Por Community (Kampong Speu)
58. Dombe Community (Tbong Khmum)
59. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
60. Fishery Community (Banteay Meanchey)
61. Front Line Defenders (FLD)

62. Forest and Biodiversity Preservation Community (Svay Rieng)
63. Free Trade Union of Workers of Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC)
64. Gender and Development Cambodia (GADC)
65. Horng Samnom Community (Kampong Speu)
66. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
67. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
68. Independent Monk Network for Social Justice (IMNSJ)
69. Indigenous Youth at Brome Community (Preah Vihear)
70. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the Framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
71. International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)
72. Khva Community (Phnom Penh)
73. Koh Sralao Fishery Community (Koh Kong)
74. Lor Peang Land Community (Kampong Chhnang)
75. Mlup Prom Vihea Thor Center (Koh Kong)
76. Moeunchey Land Community (Svay Rieng)
77. Minority Rights Organization (MIRO)
78. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
79. Network for Prey Long Protection in Mean Rith Commune (Kampong Thom)
80. Orm Laing Community (Kampong Chhnang)
81. Ou Ampil Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
82. Ou Chheu Teal Community (Preah Sihanouk)
83. Ou Khsach Community (Preah Sihanouk)
84. Ou Tracheak Chet Community (Preah Sihanouk)
85. Ou Tres Community (Preah Sihanouk)
86. Ou Vor Preng Community (Battambang)
87. Phnom Bat Community (Phnom Penh)
88. Phnom Kram Community (Siem Reap)
89. Phnom Sleuk Community (Battambang)
90. Phnom Torteong Community (Kampot)
91. Phsar Kandal Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
92. Phum 22 Community (Phnom Penh)
93. Phum Bo Loy Community (Ratanakiri)
94. Phum Dei Chhnang Community (Kampong Speu)
95. Phum Samut Leu Community (Ratanakiri)
96. Phum Ou Svay Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
97. Phum Sela Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
98. Phum Thmei Taing Samrong Community (Kampong Speu)
99. Ponlok Khmer (PKH)
100. Poy Japan Land Community (Koh Kong)
101. Prasak Community (Battambang)
102. Preah Vihear Kouy Indigenous Community
103. Prek Takung Community (Phnom Penh)
104. Prek Tanou Community (Phnom Penh)
105. Prek Trae Community (Preah Sihanouk)
106. Prey Chher Pich Sangva Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
107. Prey Long Community (Kampong Thom)
108. Prey Peay Fishery Community (Kampot)
109. Progressive Voice (PV)
110. Railway Community (Phnom Penh)
111. Raksmeay Samaki Community (Kampong Speu)
112. Roluos Cheung Ek Community (Phnom Penh)
113. Rum Cheik Land Community (Siem Reap)
114. Russey Sras Community (Phnom Penh)
115. Land and Housing Community Solidarity Network (Phnom Penh)
116. Samaki Phnom Chorm Mlou Community (Kampot)
117. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
118. Samaki Romeas Haek Land Community (Svay Rieng)
119. Samaki Rung Roeung Community (Phnom Penh)

120. Sangkom Thmey Land Community (Pursat)
121. Samaki 4 Community (Phnom Penh)
122. SAMKY Organization
123. Sdey Krom Fishery Community (Battambang)
124. SILAKA Organization
125. Skun Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
126. Skun Land Community (Siem Reap)
127. Smach Meanchey Land Community (Koh Kong)
128. Somros Koh Sdech Fishery Community (Koh Kong)
129. SOS International Airport Community (Phnom Penh)
130. Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)
131. Spean Chhes Community (Preah Sihanouk)
132. Srechong Land Community (Kampong Thom)
133. Sre Prang Community (Kampong Cham)
134. Sreveal Land Community (Kampong Thom)
135. Steung Bort village Land community (Banteay Meanchey)
136. Steung Khsach Sor Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
137. Steung Meanchey Community (Phnom Penh)
138. Strey Klangsang Community (Phnom Penh)
139. Tani Land Community (Siem Reap)
140. Ta Noun Land Community (Koh Kong)
141. Ta Trai Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
142. Teng Tao Land Community (Svay Rieng)
143. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
144. Thmor Kol Community (Phnom Penh)
145. Thmor Da Community (Pursat)
146. Thmor Thom Community (Preah Sihanouk)
147. Thnol Bort Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
148. Thnong Land Community (Koh Kong)
149. Toul Rada Community (Phnom Penh)
150. Toul Samrong Community (Kampong Chhnang)
151. Toul Sangke A Community (Phnom Penh)
152. Tourism Employee Grand Diamond City Union (Banteay Meanchey)
153. Tourism Employee Union (Banteay Meanchey)
154. Trapaing Chan Community (Kampong Chhnang)
155. Trapaing Chor Community (Kampong Speu)
156. Trapaing Krasaing Land Community (Siem Reap)
157. Trapaing Raing Community (Phnom Penh)
158. Trapaing Sangke Community (Kampot)
159. Tumnop II Community (Pursat)
160. Tunlong Community (Kampong Cham)
161. Vital Voice Global Partnership
162. World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), within the Framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders