

Joint Statement

The Violation of the Union Development Group Co. LTD (Union) against villagers in Botumsakor and Kirisakor districts, Koh Kong province

We, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) underwriting this statement, condemn the repeated and ongoing violation of communities' rights in Botumsakor and Kirisakor District, Koh Kong province, by the Union Development Group.

In 2014 -2015, Civil Society documented a series of evictions conducted by security guards and workers employed by the Union. These evictions have been overseen by a representative of the Union, who was present at all the incidents listed below. The activities of the company not only represent serious human right abuses, but also a breach of the Royal Government of Cambodia's letter No 315 ស្ន ឆ ណ issued by the Council of Minister's on February 19, 2014.

In the following incidents, security guards, workers and bulldozers of the company were deployed to burn and destroy villager's houses, huts and farmland. This is despite the request of the communities to implement the so called "leopard skin policy" for the disputed area:

1. On January 21, 2015, a Union representative with security guards destroyed and bulldozed the homes, huts and farmland of 11 families, in Tanoun village, Tanoun commune, Botumsakor district who did not agree to accept compensation offered by the company.
2. On December 26, 2014, security guards and employees of Union poured soil to block the entrance of the road and access to the village of 30 families in Prek Smach village, Koh Sdach commune, Kirisakor district,
3. From November 11-13, 2014, the company's employees with security guards destroyed and burned homes of 18 families, including one family in Samrongtakeo village, Prek Ksach commune, 16 families in Kien Krolanh village, Pnhi Meas commune, Kirisakor district and one family in Prek Smach village, Koh Sdach district,
4. From January 23 to February 2, 2014, the company's employees led security guards and workers to destroy villagers' property including 14 homes and 31 huts, 117 trees and 4 hectares of watermelon in Tanoun commune, Botumsakor and Koh Sdach commune, Kirisakor district in Koh Kong province.

Villagers have faced intimidation and continue to be threatened by employees of the company. Nevertheless, villagers have gathered during the night and day to protect their village and avoid the company destroying their property.

According to the Council of Minister's letter No 315 ស្ន ឆ ណ issued on February 19, 2014, the company was instructed to suspend destroying and removing the villagers' homes which have just been built in the old location and stop bulldozing villagers' farm crops where villagers do not agree to compensation. The company is required to comply with the leopard skin policy which is specified in its lease contract with the RGC. According to this contract, the RGC will be in charge of administrative affairs for finding a solution for relocating people which conforms to the law and its provisions. In cases where the conflict is not able to be resolved for villagers via legislative processes, that area will be considered as a suspended area. Following this, the Inter-Ministerial Committee will continue to try and find a solution in the

suspended area over three years. If the suspended area is not resolved in three years, it will be considered for exclusion.

CSOs note the absence of interventions from government authorities to stop the violations of the villagers' rights. CSOs appeal to the RGC and all levels of relevant authorities, especially the Inter-Ministerial Committee comprised of the Ministry of Environment as a chair to:

- Intervene and ensure that the company acts in accordance with the lease agreement, in particular that the leopard skin policy is implanted;
- Stop human rights violations including breaching article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* which recognizes an adequate standard of living for all including the right to housing; and
- Ensure that the conflict is resolved according to international standards.

Phnom Penh, February 4, 2015

Detail information:

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Joint Statement supports

- Vigilance
- Housing Rights Tasks Force (HRTF)