



LICADHO Canada (LC) is a small multi-national team working in close cooperation with LICADHO (*Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights*) and alongside communities, unions and other grassroots groups on the front-lines of peace and justice movements.

CENTERING SOLIDARITY

October 2013-February 2014

In the aftermath of National Elections on July 28, 2014, LC activities have increasingly evolved to include working alongside cross-sector groups. The opposition, Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) and ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) remain in a political deadlock.

Dissent is rising against the ruling government from CNRP supporters, independent unions, communities and citizens groups demanding an independent investigation into election fraud, a new election, and for Prime Minister Hun Sen to step down for widespread injustice suffered during his rule.

On top of this, the [500,000](#) plus Cambodian garment factory workers found their collective voice and began protesting for an increase in the minimum wage of \$160, putting the CPP under even more pressure to reform or concede.



Civil society gathers in Freedom Park

CNRP OPPOSITION

October 23 saw the CNRP post-election rallies grow to 25,000 people. By December 22, numbers had increased to over [100,000](#) as CNRP gained major momentum across the country. As of February 2014, CNRP continues to boycott the National Assembly in protest against the flawed election results.

"This country has changed dramatically," he said. "It's the result of social media and the fact that the Cambodian people are young. They have reached working age but they can't find jobs, and they are frustrated. They are much more informed than before. They can co-ordinate and mobilise. Anything can happen now."

[Sam Rainsy](#) – opposition leader

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RELEASED ON BAIL

On November 22 over 400 supporters, including monks, NGO workers, union representatives, youth, and other members of civil society, gathered outside the Supreme Court to demand the release of [Prisoner of Conscience](#) Yorm Bopha, a Boeung Kak lake activist. After a two-hour trial, Bopha was granted release on bail and her case was sent back to the Court of Appeal.

Bopha was happy to be finally released and reunited with her family and fellow activists in BKL but is still concerned that she could be 're-arrested like in the case of [Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun](#)', who were unfairly imprisoned twice for the murder of union leader Chea Vichea in 2004. Despite risks of re-arrest, Bopha immediately resumed her activism with fellow Boeung Kak community leaders, other threatened communities, and cross-sector groups.



CNRP rally October 23-25 attracts up to 25,000 in support of re-elections



Yorm Bopha, back in her community on November 22, after more than 444 days of unjust imprisonment.

MORE AND MORE MONK ACTIVISM

Monks and cross sector-led groups repeatedly mobilized together throughout 2013 despite repression from authorities. The monks have become a welcome and permanent fixture of civil society at demonstrations despite the CPP-aligned Buddhist hierarchy issuing several warnings against their activism.

In response to these warnings, Venerable Thach Ha Sam told the [Phnom Penh Post](#) *“Monks are citizens, so our law has permitted monks to join such affairs automatically. This participation is not in support of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, it is to call for democracy in Cambodia.”*

WORKERS UNITE

As garment workers demonstrated for a living wage, they were time and again met with lethal force and police brutality. Four instances stand out from September to January.

On September 15, the CNRP began their first multi-day demonstration to call for a vote recount or a re-election. Phnom Penh had been on lockdown for the past week, with barbed wire barricades cutting off major arteries of the city. The first of the three days of demonstrations was largely peaceful, before tensions escalated late in the evening when traffic chaos caused by the roadblocks reached a head. Police reacted with physical violence and tear gas to a stand-off between hundreds of police and a crowd of those caught up in the traffic, including commuters, local residents and demonstrators. The scene intensified as military police were given the green light to use live ammunition into the crowd, which left one young person dead and nine more suffering bullet wounds.

On November 12, 600 [SL garment factory](#) workers attempted to march from their factory to the Prime Minister’s home to press for responses from the government. They had been on strike for three months over unresolved demands for improvements in working conditions. The march was blocked by barricades and over a hundred armed anti-riot policemen, who fired tear gas canisters and rubber bullets as the crowd tried to push through the barricades. People threw stones at the shielded officers and the authorities deployed live ammunition. By the end of the morning, one innocent food vendor had been shot dead, nine people injured by bullets, including one 27-year-old man who was left paralysed, and over 30 people arrested.

On January 2, garment workers’ protests were again met with brutality by police and military police officers. [Special Command Unit 911](#) violently broke up a demonstration of garment factory workers near South Korean/U.S.-owned Yak Jin factory in Phnom Penh, using knives, pipes, slingshots, batons and high-powered rifles, including AK-47 machine guns, to intimidate and injure civilians.

On January 3, state authorities used live ammunition to clear out the Canada Industrial Area. Throughout the day, around 2,000 mixed security forces clashed with protestors and fired live ammunition, resulting in at least four civilian deaths and 38 hospitalised, 25 of whom suffered from bullet wounds.

Over the two days 23 workers, bystanders and activists were arrested, many after being severely beaten by military police and soldiers, three of the men are strong and respected non-violent activists who have worked closely with LC for the past few years and hence have become the faces of the campaign.



From December 1 - December 10, civil society groups held [peace walks](#) (Dhammayeitra) down five national roads to highlight the need for justice and peace in the country. The groups converged into Phnom Penh on December 10, International Human Rights Day, and delivered hand-written petitions by citizens across the country to the National Assembly.



November 12, Demonstration at SL factory near Wat Stung Meanchey Pagoda. [Video here](#) (Note: graphic content)



January 2, 3 and 4, 2014, garment factory strikers and state forces clash. [Video here](#) (Note: graphic content)

“Cambodian authorities appear to have given up any semblance of democracy, rule of law or justice.”
-Tola Moeun,
Head of CLEC’S labor program

COMMUNITIES DEFY BAN TO REMEMBER DEY KRAHORM

On January 24, despite a government [ban on public protests and demonstrations](#) since early January, representatives from several communities met outside of former Dey Krahorm land to share experiences and pledge to keep struggling peacefully against forced evictions. Additionally, a civil complaint was filed by several former community members against 7NG Inc. company for intentional use of violence and intentional destruction of property.

The groups also joined unions and associations in the calls to release the 23 workers and human rights defenders imprisoned in early January. Two have subsequently been released on bail. The remaining 21 are still imprisoned.

LC joins in solidarity with the Free the 21 campaign's demand to release the 21 people and in the efforts to create a space for freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

The struggle continues...



These arrests sparked a cross-sector campaign to 'Free the 23' including the above three activists. From left to right: Theng Savoeun, Coordinator of the Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Vorn Pao, President of Independent and Democracy of Informal Economic Association (IDEA), and Chan Puthisak, a human rights defender from the Boeung Kak Lake (BKL) community.

You Can Help Too!

Educate, advocate and/or donate. These are the best ways to support Cambodians struggling for rights and justice at this time.

LC has a super cool list of partners; donate to your area of interest (unions, students groups, communities, HR groups/LICADHO), sign up for their/our newsletters, participate in petitions, 'like' LICADHO's [Facebook](#) page, follow us on [Twitter](#), spread the word back at your office, write me a letter, visit LC's website, watch our [videos](#).

There is so much YOU can do to show Cambodia that you are paying attention.

www.licadho-cambodia.org

www.licadhocanada.com



January 24, 2014 – communities including Boeung Kak Lake, Borei Keila and Thmor Kol, unions and other civil society groups joined former Dey Krahorm residents in solidarity to mark the five-year anniversary of their [brutal eviction](#) by 7NG company and state authorities.

“We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence.

But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.”

– Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)



LC'S very own Chan Penborey is part of nominated WITNESS video. You can see and vote for the video [here!](#)

