



LICADHO Canada provides critical services to communities on the front lines of the land-grabbing crisis in Cambodia. We do so in meaningful collaboration with LICADHO – *Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights*.

November 2010 – MONK MADNESS

Monk Authorities Attempt to Silence Venerable Sovath

[Venerable Sovath](#) has become a well known Cambodian human rights defending monk and has faced his share of threats and intimidation from the district authorities.

In August, Venerable Sovath started receiving threats of de-frocking, arrest, and violence from various **monk** authorities. They wanted him to stop attending court trials in Siem Reap. Since doing so is not in violation of Buddhist laws, Venerable Sovath continued to go observe court trials and verdicts pertaining to Chi Kreng community.

On August 17, monk police showed up and tried to remove Venerable Sovath from the front of the court. More than 150 villagers surrounded Venerable Sovath, preventing his removal.

On August 20, Venerable Sovath joined more than 200 villagers outside the court to hear a verdict. More than 30 monks, monk police and monk ministers arrived at the court to arrest Venerable Sovath. Villagers again surrounded the Venerable and refused to allow the authorities to take him.

LC director and a freelance filmmaker drove the Venerable back to Siem Reap town where the vehicle was stopped by police and escorted to a new location and detained for more than 30 minutes. Hundreds of villagers heard about the problem and quickly arrived on scene. They surrounded the vehicle, using their bodies, tears and prayers to protect Venerable Sovath. Again they were successful, and the villagers walked the vehicle and occupants through Siem Reap to safety.

We are happy to report that Venerable Sovath is currently safe, but the dangers are far from over. The de-frocking order still exists.

Can't Keep a Good Monk Down

Venerable Sovath continues to support threatened communities and imprisoned human rights defenders across the country. He teaches how Buddhist principles are directly related to human rights, and encourages Cambodians to choose non-violent resistance efforts.

International folks have become interested in his story. Recently, partner organisation WITNESS invited both Venerable Sovath and the President of LICADHO to their annual [‘Focus for Change’](#) gala in New York to honour their work using videos to stop forced evictions in Cambodia. So in December, Venerable Sovath and LICADHO are off to New York!

Vehicle of Change

Protecting our fellow HRD's in Cambodia has not always been easy and far from stress-free, with threats towards community leaders and the protection of Venerable Sovath becoming increasingly difficult. LC team has been thinking of ways to improve our protective accompaniment strategies. So this Christmas LICADHO Canada is launching the ‘Vehicle of Change’ Christmas Appeal. Show your support and help us to continue to protect Cambodian HRD's. SEE ATTACHED POSTER



Monk police illegally enters vehicle and attempts to force Ven. Sovath from the car.



Villagers pray to the monk authorities to leave Sovath alone

Forcibly defrocking a monk is only enacted on monks who have committed any of the four offenses (*bap*) that “defeat” a monk: **1) engaging in sexual relations, 2) stealing, 3) killing, or 4) falsely claiming to possess superhuman powers.**



Protecting their monk, villagers escort the vehicle through Siem Reap.

www.licadhocanada.com

www.licadho-cambodia.org