 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.

CROSS SECTOR SOLIDARITY
February 2014 – August 2014

FREE THE 23 CAMPAIGN
The FreeThe23 campaign symbolised cross sector solidarity at its peak. The trial of 23 workers and human rights defenders who were imprisoned after lethal clashes in early January started on April 25 and took place over five non-consecutive days. Throughout the trial several land communities, unions, monk networks and other groups gathered to demand justice for these men. The campaign reached global recognition and global unions, international media and labour groups from around the world showed solidarity with the 23. On May 30, the 23 were convicted by the clown court with a variety of charges (some with heavy sentences of between 4 and 4.5 years and fines equivalent to US$ 2000) but all sentences were suspended. The men walked out of prison the same day as their conviction and marched to Phnom Penh together with 500 of their supporters.

POLITICAL CRISIS
The political environment in Cambodia has taken yet another dramatic turn. After months of clampdowns on protesters, suppression of freedom of speech and assembly, and almost a year-long boycott of the National Assembly by the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), a protest intended to draw attention to the barricading of Freedom Park on July 15 left numerous people injured. During the protest, two CNRP members of parliament-elect were arrested followed by additional five CNRP members of parliament-elect and one CNRP youth activist arrested and put in pre-trial detention. During negotiations between CNRP and the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) the eight were used by the latter as bargaining tools to end the CNRP boycott of the National Assembly. The eight were provisionally released on July 22 as the political deadlock ended with a deal between CNRP and CPP; a highly questioned deal in which the CNRP seems to have reneged on their original demands and succumbed to the violent bullying of the long standing regime. The release of the eight came shortly after the CNRP agreed to take their seats in the National Assembly. Amidst further negotiations between CNRP and CPP regarding constitutional amendments, three additional CNRP activists were arrested and remained detained until August 22.
LEGALIZING THE USE OF THE COURTS AS A WEAPON

With the ruling regime continuing to use the court as a tool against its opponents, the three new laws on the judiciary are most concerning. The three laws do not comply with Cambodia’s constitution. Rather these new laws legalize the government’s control over the courts and judges. Furthermore the laws in draft form did not receive proper review as the opposition party CNRP was boycotting the National Assembly at the time of the review of the drafts.

The regime has clearly proven a lack of will to reform in any regard. Their will to take control over all areas that challenge their authority are also evident in the content of the draft laws they are pushing through, including draft Cyber Law, draft Law on Associations and NGOs, and draft Trade Union Laws. Once these laws are enacted, and due to the international community’s apparent indifference to the spread of democracy in Cambodia, the only way forward towards justice will be through the civil disobedience from people’s movements.

LC IS GROWING!

Part of our silence since our last newsletter is because LC has been busy implementing a lot of organisational changes. After an external evaluation that was conducted in 2013, 2014 has been the year of aligning with the recommendations brought forward by the evaluation. LC’s activities now fit under two main programs aligned with LICADHO’s programs:
- Monitoring & Protection
- Promotion & Advocacy

STAFFING CHANGES

LC’s management has also gone through changes. LC’s Director, Lee Robinson, has stepped down and taken on a new position within LC as Video & Security Consultant. LC’s management is now divided among the team, where each team member is responsible for his or her own area. With this new division of management LC hopes to have a more stable job-sharing foundation with less activities being dependent on a Director.

LC has had several staff changes the last months. While we are sad to say goodbye to Ruth and Alex who have left LC to take on new challenges, LC welcomes Anna as our new Organisational Development Consultant. LC’s team now consist of:
- Pen Chanborey – Technical Outreach Coordinator
- Cheng Sreyvann – Monitoring & Protection Coordinator
- Mao Narin – Financial Manager
- Lee Robinson – Video & Security Consultant
- Anna Pettersson – Organisational Development Consultant
- Sokun Sambathpiseth – HRD Assistant
NEW WEBSITE

LC is proud to announce that we have launched a new website designed by Leak Soursdey. Check it out! We have also re-started LC’s Twitter account and have started tweeting again. We hope that many of you will follow our updates on our website and on Twitter in the future.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER APPAREL (HRDA)

A new stock of HRDA items, including bags, is now available for purchasing. Please contact us if you are interested in buying items or wish to become a distributor in your country.

WHAT’S UP

LC just started our new project which aims at increasing the use of ICT tools among communities, unions and other groups. LC, together with WITNESS, will also organise workshops to follow up on last year’s workshop on video advocacy to develop our and our partners’ video skills further, as well as those of our partners.

YOU CAN HELP TOO!

Educate yourself and others about the human rights situation in Cambodia via Twitter, Facebook and LICADHO/LICADHO Canada websites.

Become a LICADHO Canada advocate, be an online social activist, sign petitions, join campaigns, or become a Human Rights Defenders Apparel Distributor. Your actions will support and protect Cambodian activists and their communities.

Donate today to protect and defend Cambodian human rights defenders and their communities. LICADHO Canada is in constant need of funding support to address the increasing number of emergencies arising from Cambodia’s current political and human rights crisis.

For more information: contact@licadhocanada.com