

Registered in British Columbia, LICADHO Canada provides critical services to communities on the front lines of the Cambodian land-grabbing crisis in meaningful collaboration with LICADHO - *Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defense of Human Rights*.

PEOPLE POWER FREES THE 15! August 2012



BKL women singing before arrests

Since the start of this year, Cambodian civil society has been slammed with brutality, injustice and a downwardly-[spiralling human rights](#) environment. The violent eviction of [Borei Keila](#) in January was followed by the killings of a prominent [environmental activist](#) in April and a 14-year-old girl during an [eviction in Kratie](#) in May. [Thirteen singing female activists](#) from Boeung Kak Lake were arrested shortly after this.

So on May 24 when authorities arrested two more Boeung Kak Lake activists and [detained a human rights monk](#) outside a clown court where the 13 women were being sentenced to 2.5 years in prison on bogus charges, our shock turned instead to anger and resolve.

Free the 15! Stop the Violence!

The Free the 15! Stop the Violence! [campaign](#) started organically and grew quickly through inspirational solidarity. Boeung Kak Lake community members led regular solidarity actions (totalling 13 actions and multiple press conferences in a 32-day period); partners collaborated on adding signatories to a [letter to the World Bank](#) demanding that they not resume lending to Cambodia; opposition party members lobbied in Washington; partners in East Timor sent a [solidarity video](#) to support Boeung Kak community; South Korean partners staged an action outside the Cambodia Embassy in Seoul; international human rights partners [issued an open letter](#) condemning the arrests and convictions; and online petitions added to mounting pressure.

By early June the two pre-trial detainees were released and the appeal court date for the 13 was set for June 27.

Appeal Court Day

Boeung Kak Lake community members, friends and media were out in full force on June 27. So were the authorities, who set up roadblocks to prevent all access to the court. Despite police violence early in the day when children tried to reach the court and which resulted in a tragic miscarriage, the community remained resilient and stood its ground throughout the trial. By 12:30 the verdict was announced. The Appeal court upheld the lower court's verdict but suspended the remainder of the sentences.

By 7:30pm, the 13 were released into a crowd of 500 supporters outside the prison. A procession led by 40 tuk tuks brought the crowd home to the community, where a jubilant party awaited.

Flowers of Freedom

The solidarity and people power exhibited throughout the campaign was so strong and had touched so many people across the globe that LICADHO and LC produced a video that encapsulates the campaign called [Flowers of Freedom: The Campaign to Free the 15](#).



Seven LICADHO/LC videos compiled to advocate during the campaign



Crowd of more than 500 singing at the roadblocks during the appeal court trial

Charges Filed Against Authorities for Violence

At the end of July, Mrs. Bov Srey Sras, 25, [filed a complaint](#) at the municipal court against authorities involved in the police violence against her on the day of the Appeal trial, which had resulted in her miscarriage of a two-month-old fetus. Srey Sras had been at the roadblocks when she was kicked and punched by police.

Responding to the complaint, the accused Phnom Penh municipal deputy police chief Phoung Malay responded by saying “I want to tell her that if she wants to get back her kid, I am also young.”

What’s Next for Boeung Kak Lake?

The community continues to lobby the government to [demarcate the 12.44 hectares](#) allocated to the community and to include more than 50 families who have been arbitrarily excluded from the land concession. There has still been no response.

LC continues to document, monitor, support and advocate for Boeung Kak community. In September, 3-4 key Boeung Kak activists will work with LC to produce music videos for their community songs.

Free Mam Sonando!

On July 15th, Mam Sonando was [arrested](#) at the request of the Prime Minister [and charged](#) with crimes related to participating in an “insurrectionary movement”, inciting people to take up arms against the state, and obstruction of public officials, all in relation to the ongoing land dispute in Kratie.

Sonando, a French and Cambodian national, is the owner of Beehive Radio, one of the few independent radio stations in Cambodia, and also the founder and president of the Democrat Association.

Amnesty has labelled Sonando a ‘prisoner of conscience’. This attack on the media and attack on freedom of expression is another attack on us all. Once again, association, students, unions, communities, media, and local and international NGOs campaign to release Sonando.

You Can Help Too!

Educate, advocate and/or donate. Those 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



Pregnant woman falls unconscious after being kicked and hit by police.

