

LC works for all people in Cambodia to live in a peaceful society that respects human rights, democracy, and social justice.

July 28 - 2015



FAST-TRACKING THE LANGO

The approval of the widely-criticized Law on Association and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO) at the National Assembly and the Senate on July 13 and July 24 respectively, was part of ruling Cambodian People's Party (CCP) latest attempts to restrict Cambodia's civil society.

Months prior to this, civil society activists began to regularly engage in impassioned nation-wide protests against the LANGO and a draft Trade Union Law (TUL), which both violate Cambodia's constitution and international human rights conventions. International stakeholders such as the European Parliament, international brands, and rights groups, have also publicly expressed their concern and condemnation for the LANGO and draft TUL.



Construction workers join a Say No to LANGO-forum organized by Solidarity House in Freedom Park, July 9 2015.

On July 13, 68 members of Parliament from the ruling CPP voted to adopt the LANGO. The 55 members of parliament from the opposition, Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), boycotted the extraordinary session, while over 500 people from civil society assembled near the National Assembly to voice their condemnation of the law amidst heavy and belligerent police presence.

On July 24, the LANGO was approved by the Senate as over 400 people from grassroots groups, unions, monks' groups and other associations protested against the law outside the Senate. All 44 CPP senators present voted to approve the law. As with the National Assembly vote on July 13, the opposition boycotted the vote at the

Senate. The law will now be sent to the Constitutional Council before being presented to the King for final approval.

LANGO will not only affect NGOs. The Law's mandatory registration provision applies to any group of people who come together for a common cause, including youth and student groups, communities and grassroots groups. Only NGOs, associations and groups that are perceived as 'good' by the authorities will be registered and allowed to operate. Groups that nag in the authorities' eyes can be denied registration, or blocked on other provisions in the law, and criminalized.

FIVE REASON TO SAY NO!

Citizen Groups Involved in the Campaign to Say No to the NGO & Trade Union Laws:

- LANGO will be used by the government to deny us justice
- LANGO will be used to stop us from joining together
- LANGO will be used to treat us as criminals
- LANGO will be used to silence our voices
- LANGO will be used to restrict our freedoms

Read the full statement [here](#)



"We were just exercising our rights under the Constitution to demonstrate and express our views. These arrests show that we are not a democratic country"

Mr. Heng Somnang/Director Khmer Youth Empire

CENSORING THE CRITICS

With the approval of LANGO and the looming threat of other repressive laws such as the draft TUL, draft Law on Telecommunications and draft Cyber Crime Law, Cambodia is set to follow steps of other repressive countries like China, Vietnam, Uganda and Russia. While CPP is intensifying the intimidation strategy towards their critics without enough international retaliation, civil society bears a huge responsibility of continuing to stand up for their rights and not give in to such threats.

On two occasions since the National Assembly approved the LANGO, civil society groups have been arrested during actions to highlight the shrinking democratic space in Cambodia.

On July 18, around 50 lands rights activists and civil society members distributed leaflets around Phnom Penh's main shopping areas to inform the public about the LANGO. At one

of the groups' stops, security guards and police blocked the groups from continuing and detained five land rights activists for over six hours. LC's Monitoring & Protection Coordinator was also detained for a few hours.

On July 26, five men and one woman from youth groups based in Preah Vihear and Phnom Penh were arrested after gathering in front of the National Assembly to protest the LANGO. While the arrested were released later in the same day, it sheds light on the new LANGO times.

Cambodian civil society is vital to hold the government accountable. With general elections approaching in 2018, there is no doubt that the CPP will use LANGO and other repressive laws to harass, criminalize and imprison critics, while maintaining a superficial veneer of legitimacy over their authoritarian rule. These laws will only serve to shrink the democratic space further.



Song Sreyleap and Pov Sophea, both from Boeung Kak community, detained in Phnom Penh's 7 Makara police station, July 18, 2015.



Land rights activists carry a giant Say No! Union, Association and NGO Law logo as CPP senators approve the LANGO.

LICADHO CANADA JOINS CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN CALLS TO REJECT LANGO

LICADHO Canada joins 39 other regional and international civil society organisations in urging the government of Cambodia to immediately withdraw the draft LANGO (July 6, 2015)

LICADHO Canada and 37 civil society groups call on Senate to reject LANGO (July 14, 2015)

LICADHO Canada and 67 civil society organisations condemn the National Assembly's unanimous approval of the LANGO (July 16, 2015)

GLOBAL WITNESS ISSUED A STATEMENT ON JULY 27, 2015

"Giving the government total control over all groups from big, international NGOs to community-based grassroots movements, the LANGO enables the ruling Cambodian People's Party to pick and choose which groups can exist and criminalise those deemed to be trouble makers. Cambodia's brave and vibrant civil society has struggled for decades to keep the country's notoriously corrupt government in check, an already-uphill battle which the LANGO makes considerably harder."

Read the full statement [here](#).

FOR MORE UPDATES ON LANGO AND THE DRAFT TRADE UNION LAW

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