

## JOINT STATEMENT

### Re-open STT's Photo Exhibition and Hold Authorities to Account

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

We, the undersigned, are disappointed by the actions of the Sangkat Nirouth Police Station in Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh, which ordered the owner of Champei Garden Restaurant to stop displaying photographs that were part of an exhibition by Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT). The authorities provided no reason or justification for their actions.

The topic of the photo exhibition was *Housing and Life*, and it had opened on 25 February 2024. It aimed to highlight the ongoing concerns and challenges facing Cambodia's urban poor communities, with the purpose of finding solutions.

The dismantling of STT's photo exhibition without explanation is a clear violation of freedom of expression and demonstrates a disregard for art forms that tell the important stories of vulnerable and urban poor communities. We remain disturbed about the continuation of these kinds of arbitrary crackdowns on peaceful forms of expression under the new government.

Cambodia's constitution enshrines freedom of expression and the rule of law. Instead of silencing peaceful voices that raise legitimate concerns about Cambodia's urban poor communities, authorities should direct their efforts towards addressing the causes of harms – such as land grabbing, predatory microlending practices, and debt bondage – that currently plague those communities.

We, as civil society organisations in Cambodia, call for the *Housing and Life* exhibition to be allowed to continue without interference. We also request that the Ministry of Interior monitor the activities of the authorities in Khan Chbar Ampov and Sangkat Nirouth Police Station and that the ministry instruct them to provide their reasoning behind the dismantling of STT's exhibition. Furthermore, we request that both institutions be held accountable for their actions, and for the Ministry of Interior to counsel all authorities on topics pertaining to freedom of expression and the rule of law so as to protect the rights of all Cambodian people.

#### **This joint statement is endorsed by:**

1. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
2. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
3. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
4. Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
5. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
6. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
7. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)

8. Kao Pi Community
9. Chamreun Community
10. Chhma Aeot Community
11. Dak Por Community (Kompong Speu)
12. Srae Prang Land Community (Tboung Khmum)
13. Land Community (Pailin)
14. Andoung Trabek Land Community (Svay Rieng)
15. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
16. Trapeang Chour Community (Kampong Speu)
17. Trapang Rang Community
18. Tlan 100 Community
19. Community to Protect Nature (Pursat)
20. Stuong Khsach Sa Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
21. Tumnop Ta Thlang Community
22. Boeung Chhouk Meanchey Tmey 2 Community
23. Boeung Chhuk A Community
24. Boeung Trabek Phum 4 Community
25. Phlov Roth Phleung Community
26. Cheyleak Community
27. Pong Ro Senchey Community
28. Trapang Chan Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
29. Prey Chher Phnom Tnaut Community
30. Prey Chher Pech Changvar Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
31. Rattanak Rokha Forestry Community (Oddar Meanchey)
32. Prey Lang Community (Kratie)
33. Prey Lang Community (Preah Vihear)
34. Prey Lang Community (Stung Treng)
35. Prek Takong 3 Community
36. Prek Takong 60m Community
37. Prey Peay Community
38. Phnom Krom Community (Siem Reap)
39. Meanchey Community
40. Rolous Cheung Ek community
41. Raksmei Samaki Community
42. Reaksmei Sameakki (Kompong Speu)
43. Veal Entry Community
44. Veal Sbov Community
45. Smor San Community
46. Samaki Chek Meas Community
47. Samaki Romeas Hek Community
48. Samaki Rong Roeung Community
49. Strey Klahan Community
50. Strey Klang Sang Community
51. Stoeng Kambot Community
52. Sen Reak Reay Community
53. Lor Peang Community
54. Andoung Ta Eang Community

55. Amleang Community (Kompong Speu)
56. Russey Sros Community
57. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
58. Transparency International Cambodia (TI)
59. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
60. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut Organization (STT)
61. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
62. Equitable Cambodia (EC)

**For more information:**

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