

Abolish Slave Compounds in Cambodia

10 March 2022

We are deeply disturbed by reports of widespread human trafficking into Cambodia leading to forced labour, slavery and torture at compounds across the country. Dozens of media reports and numerous victim accounts collected by local and international organisations suggest that thousands of people, mostly foreign nationals, are entrapped in these situations. We call on the government to take meaningful and coordinated action to respond to these gross human rights violations, and to investigate alleged complicity between some government authorities and the criminal enterprises.

Media reports and victim accounts indicate these abuses involve foreign citizens who are kidnapped, sold, trafficked or tricked into accepting jobs in Cambodia. Once in Cambodia, they are detained in large compounds and forced to work, often conducting online scam operations targeting foreign nationals outside the country. Workers who escape report having faced physical and mental threats and violence at the hands of their captors. Reports indicate that most compounds are located in Sihanoukville, yet similar abuses have been reported in Phnom Penh, Pursat, Koh Kong and other provinces.

This grave reality has been recognised by numerous foreign embassies. Indonesia [issued a warning](#) regarding the situation in January 2021; Vietnam [warned its citizens](#) of such operations in June 2021; the Thai government [issued a warning](#) in November 2021; the Pakistan Embassy [reported rescuing](#) four citizens in January 2022; and the Chinese Embassy has published multiple statements and warnings regarding such operations. Thai police have expressed concern and recently stepped-up efforts to intervene in cases where Thai citizens have been trafficked and become trapped in these compounds.

Local and international journalists have been central to bringing this human rights crisis to light, reporting on the victims, perpetrators, and government institutions involved in these operations. Reports have implicated a [well-known Cambodian tycoon](#) and a [ruling party senator](#) as being connected to some of the operations.

While some Cambodian authorities have responded to a handful of individual complaints, this crisis cannot be resolved on a case-by-case basis. A coordinated and targeted response is urgently needed from the Cambodian government, local and international organisations, UN bodies, and other governments to respond to the magnitude of this crisis. We urge the Cambodian government to fulfil its responsibility to fully investigate the abuses within its territory; abolish all compounds linked with illegal gambling and fraud operations, and the associated forced labour, slavery or torture; ensure that those entrapped are released and provided with safety; and prosecute all those responsible in accordance with Cambodian law.

The continued existence of these operations is a tragedy, and we are horrified that Cambodia is being used as a base for such inhumanity. All relevant actors must immediately guarantee that no one is subject to slavery or torture within Cambodia.

This statement endorsed by:

1. Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)
2. Association of Domestic Workers (ADW)
3. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
4. Bytes for All, Pakistan
5. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
6. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
7. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
8. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
9. Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia
10. Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community Association (CCFC)
11. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)

12. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
13. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
14. Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
15. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
16. Defense of Human Rights & Public Service Trust, Pakistan
17. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
18. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
19. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
20. Initiativ Kambodja (IK)
21. International Justice Mission (IJM)
22. M'Lop Tapang
23. Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)
24. Odhikar, Bangladesh
25. Peace Bridges Organization (PBO)
26. People Center for Development and Peace (PDP-Center)
27. People's Empowerment Foundation, Thailand
28. Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), Pakistan
29. Transparency International Cambodia (TI)
30. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
31. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Malaysia
32. Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC), Nepal
33. Think Centre, Singapore
34. Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India
35. Progressive Voice, Myanmar

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