Joint Statement

Seven-Year Prison Sentence for Student Leader Thy Thorn is Punishment for Activism

Phnom Penh, 7 September 2026

The seven-year prison sentence handed down to 25-year-old Thy Thorn, vice president of the Khmer Student Intelligent League Association (KSILA), on 2 September over baseless plotting charges is a disproportionate punishment for Thorn's commitment to peaceful activism. We, the undersigned civil society group, are deeply pained by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court's decision, and we call for Thorn to be immediately released and the charges against him to be dropped.

In August 2024, Thorn was arrested in relation to public protests and social media campaigns opposing the Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle Area (CLV-DTA), a regional cooperation agreement from which later the Cambodian government withdrew itself. Thorn was among the more than 60 people arrested, charged and imprisoned over their expression opposing the agreement. Thorn has had his requests for bail and early release rejected by the Municipal, Appeal and Supreme Court, but he has remained committed to his activism throughout these two years of legal setbacks.

Thorn is well-known for his social and environmental activism. He has joined campaigns calling for the release of then-imprisoned union leader Rong Chun, the release of the five Mother Nature environmental activists, and the freeing of youth leader and KSILA President Koet Saray. He also called on the government to halt illegal sand dredging, designate Koh Kong Krao island as a national park, and has sought to raise public awareness about civil and political rights.

A seven-year prison sentence for Thorn is an arbitrary and unjust punishment. Thorn's trial did not demonstrate any evidence of plotting against the state. The sentence serves as a deterrent for all Cambodians, who have the right under national and international law to express themselves and their opinions on important topics affecting the nation. The government must respect that right. Peaceful social and environmental activism is not a crime. All activists are entitled to express their opinions, and their actions benefit the Cambodian people and nation.

We call for authorities to drop the charges and release Thorn and other activists immediately and unconditionally. The government should stop all forms of persecution against activists and ensure that all people have the space to exercise their rights and freedom of expression, assembly and association.

This joint statement is endorsed by:

1. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
2. Boeung Pi community (Battambang)
3. Bos Snor Community (Tbong Khmum)
4. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)
5. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
6. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
7. Cambodia Institute for Democracy (CID)
8. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
9. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
10. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF)
11. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)

12. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
13. Chi Kha Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong)
14. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)
15. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
16. Community to Protect Nature (Pursat)
17. Dak Por Community (Kampong Speu)
18. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
19. Free and Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
20. Kbal Kla Forestry Community (Kampong Thom)
21. Klaing Toek 78 Community (Siem Reap)
22. Kuy Indigenous Community in Praeus K'ak Village (Preah Vihear)
23. Kuy Indigenous Community in Ngan Commune (Kampong Thom)
24. Kuy Indigenous Community in Prame Commune (Preah Vihear)
25. Labor Rights Supported Union Khmer Employees of Naga World (L.R.S.U)
26. Land Community (Pailin)
27. Lor Peang Community (Kampong Chhnang)
28. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
29. Nature Protection Odom Sre Pors Community (Kampong Speu)
30. Not1More (N1M)
31. Partnership for Environment and Development Organization (PED)
32. People Center for Development and Peace- Center (PDP)
33. Phnom Krom Community (Siem Reap)
34. Pongrok Chey Leak community (Kampot)
35. Prey Chher Pech Changvar Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
36. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
37. Reaksmei Sameakki Community (Kampong Speu)
38. Rattanak Rokha Forestry Community (Oddar Meanchey)
39. Samaki Chek Meas Community (Svay Rieng)
40. Samaki Sangkae Pir Mean Rith (Preah Vihear)
41. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut Organisation (STT)
42. Srae Prang Land Community (Tboung Khmum)
43. Sre Ampel Water Fall Tourism Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
44. Stueng Khsach Sa Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
45. Tonlung Community (Tboung Khmum)
46. Trapeang Chan Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
47. Trapeang Chour Community (Kampong Speu)