



**CCHR PRESS RELEASE – Phnom Penh, 12 November 2013**

**CCHR deplors the use of live ammunition by security forces as today's SL Garment Factory protests turned violent**

[The Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#) (“CCHR”) strongly condemns the violent turn of events during today's – 12 November 2013 – protest by hundreds of garment workers from the SL Garment Factory, which produces garments for the Gap and H&M. Strikes and protests at the SL Garment Factory have been ongoing since early August, with workers asking for a wage increase, the reinstatement of meal breaks and the removal of military police hired by the factory as security guards, demands which have remained unanswered by the factory's management. The protestors today were attempting to march to Prime Minister Hun Sen's house near the Independence Monument in central Phnom Penh, but were stopped by security forces in the capital's Meanchey district, where the factory is located.

Clashes between the protestors and the security forces erupted mid-morning Tuesday, during which, according to sources contacted by CCHR, at least one police car and two police motorbikes were set on fire by the protestors and at least three police officers were threatened by protestors and detained inside the Stung Meanchey pagoda, after which riot police intervened more forcefully. During the clashes, one woman, Heng Sokhon – a 49-year-old rice vendor and a bystander not taking part in the demonstration – was shot by the security forces. She was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Several other civilians were also injured during the clashes. Riot police is reported to have fired live ammunition, in addition to 38mm rubber bullet rounds and tear gas. The protestors were dispersed by the security forces around mid-day, with around 20 protestors – including at least seven monks – reportedly being arrested.

While CCHR condemns the violence used by both sides, CCHR reminds the Royal Government of Cambodia (the “RGC”) that security forces must abide by the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officers, which state that police can resort to the use of force and firearms only as a last resort, if it is proportionate and in self-defense against the imminent threat of death or serious injury. These requirements are echoed in the Cambodian Criminal Code. The RGC must immediately open an investigation into this morning's events and put in place mechanisms to ensure the death of innocent bystanders does not happen again, as well as ensure that all businesses operating in Cambodia respect the provisions in Cambodian law related to labor rights and the right to freedom of association, including those to collective bargaining.

**CCHR President Ou Virak comments:**

*“While the authorities have a responsibility to respond when protests turn violent, it is crucial that any and all measures taken are proportional to the actions of the protestors. Today's shooting is the second shooting death by Cambodia's security forces during protests in less than two months. Unfortunately, these deaths are occurring in a context of complete impunity for those who violate human rights. To*

*date, we haven't seen any attempts to properly investigate Mao Sok Chan's death, who was similarly killed during protests on 15 September. I hope that this morning's events will finally persuade the authorities to properly investigate why innocent bystanders keep finding themselves in the line of fire."*

**For more information, please contact Ou Virak via telephone at +855 (0) 1240 4051 or e-mail at [ouvirak@cchrcambodia.org](mailto:ouvirak@cchrcambodia.org) or CCHR Consultant Juliette Rousselot at +855 (0) 1535 0620 or e-mail at [julietterousselot@cchrcambodia.org](mailto:julietterousselot@cchrcambodia.org).**

– END –

Notes to the Editor:

CCHR, founded in November 2002, is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights throughout Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of International Freedom of Expression Exchanges (IFEX), the global network for freedom of expression. CCHR is also a member of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) SOS-Torture Network.

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal [www.sithi.org](http://www.sithi.org) is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms and the 2013 winner of the Communication for Social Change Award, awarded by the Centre of Communication and Social Change at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.