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On the occasion of Labor Day, CCHR calls for renewed efforts to protect workers' rights

On the occasion of Labor Day, 1 May 2014, [the Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#) (“CCHR”) calls on the Royal Government of Cambodia (the “RGC”) to commit to protecting and promoting labor and workers’ rights in the Kingdom of Cambodia (“Cambodia”). Although human rights violations are rampant, the RGC has done little to concretely address these problems, despite its legal obligations to do so.

Over the past two decades, the garment industry has grown exponentially and is now one of the most important industries in Cambodia, representing a large share of the country’s GDP and employing close to half a million people. But as CCHR noted in its January 2014 [Policy Brief](#) on the garment industry in Cambodia, human rights in Cambodia’s garment factories are now more often than not ignored and abused by employers. The garment industry is now plagued by poor workplace and living conditions, insufficient wages, job insecurity, gender-based violence and widespread violations of freedom of association and union rights.

Under domestic and international law, the RGC is responsible for not only refraining from violating human rights themselves but also for ensuring that private actors do not violate human rights. Short and medium term steps towards achieving this include ratifying the International Labour Organization’s Labour Inspection Convention 1947 (No. 81), amending the Labor Law to incorporate more substantial sanctions against those who violate the Labor Law, exercising systematic oversight and inspections of garment factories and other businesses, and ensuring adequate consultation with civil society regarding the forthcoming Law on Trade Unions. CCHR also calls on all stakeholders – including the RGC, garment factories and employers’ associations, and trade unions – to recommit to a peaceful resolution to these issues, to refrain from further violence and intimidation and to negotiate with each other in good faith.

CCHR Business and Human Rights Project Coordinator Duch Piseth comments:

“Although the RGC has repeatedly pledged to address the issues surrounding the garment industry, there have not been any noticeable improvements in the situation. Meanwhile, many of the union leaders who are fighting against these human rights violations are being repeatedly targeted by the authorities, with many of them currently facing criminal charges. It is high time that the RGC take concrete actions to protect Cambodian workers – both in the garment industry and across all other sectors of the economy.”

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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 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.