



**Media Comment, Phnom Penh, 15 February 2012**

**CCHR urges court officials to expedite appeal in controversial lesbian case**

It was reported in *The Phnom Penh Post* on 14 February 2012 (“UN funds appeal in young lesbian’s case”) that the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (the “OHCHR”) is funding a lawyer for an appeal in a young lesbian’s case. Phlong Srey Rann was arrested on 12 August 2011, just two days after her girlfriend’s brother accused her of illegal detention and human trafficking. In November 2011, a judge found her guilty of having sexual intercourse with a minor and sentenced her to five years in prison. However, significant doubt has been cast on the court’s judgment by the circumstances of the case. Now with legal representation, she can appeal the decision, although to date she has already been held in detention for more than six months, including pre-trial detention.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) released a [“Fair Trial Rights and Trial Monitoring Handbook”](#), which described the importance of the right to be tried without undue delay, ensuring that those held in detention during their trial are not denied their liberty for longer than necessary. This right also aims to reduce the possibility of miscarriages of justice by ensuring that innocent individuals who are charged with crimes are not subject to prolonged periods of imprisonment for crimes that they did not commit.

Phlong Srey Rann was quoted by *The Phnom Penh Post* on 26 January 2012 as saying that she worried most about her family, who depend on her monthly wage of US\$61. “*I am the sole supporter ... we are so poor*”, she said. Yesterday, *The Phnom Penh Post* reported that Phlong Srey Rann’s family had recently lost their home because they could not afford the rent without their daughter’s garment factory earnings. If she is innocent, it is vital that she is released without delay.

**In response to news of the UN’s legal funding, HEM Sokly, Project Co-ordinator for CCHR’s Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity (“SOGI”) Project – which works to protect the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (“LGBT”) people by building and supporting a network of LGBT people in Cambodia and empowering them to advocate for their own rights – commented:**

*“We welcome the decision by the OHCHR to fund legal assistance for Phlong Srey Rann. Now we call on the President of the Court of Appeal to speed up the appeal process. The court should perform its vital role in promoting equality and freedom for every human being by ensuring justice and guaranteeing universal fair trial rights, especially the right to be tried within a reasonable time. A full and proper investigation should be conducted by competent, independent and impartial court officials. All of these rights have constitutional value, as provided for by Article 38 of the Cambodian Constitution, namely that the prosecution, arrest or detention of any person shall not be done except in accordance with the law, and that any case of doubt shall be resolved in favor of the accused.”*

**For more information please contact HEM Sokly (tel: +855 (0) 92 805 808 or e-mail [soklyhem@cchrcambodia.org](mailto:soklyhem@cchrcambodia.org)).**

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