

March 18, 2009

To:

H.E. Samdech Hun Sen
Prime Minister
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H.E. Im Chhun Lim
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CC:

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Mr. Yves Cabannes
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Advisory Group on Forced Evictions UN-Habitat
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Re: Stop the evictions and allow for fair negotiations between the parties in the Reak Reay land dispute in Phnom Penh

o/o

Dear Prime Minister Hun Sen,

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI), an international network of social organizations (inhabitants' associations, tenants' unions, homeless and poorly sheltered people's committees, housing cooperatives and social centres, volunteers' and migrants' associations), which for many years has been committed to the defence of housing rights 'without frontiers'. Besides, I am member of the UN-Advisory Group on Forced Evictions.

Since our organization received very disturbing information from civil society organizations, I am writing to express my deep concern over the apparently imminent forced eviction of residents from the Reak Reay community in Phnom Penh. I appeal to you to allow sufficient time for Reak Reay residents and the Canadia Bank to conduct meaningful negotiations in a fair, peaceful and transparent manner.

On 30 January 2009, the Council of Ministers issued Notice No. 157, offering the community onsite upgrading in Reak Reay, or housing at a relocation site and financial compensation. Despite this notice, construction workers in early March began erecting fences around the houses of the community, and began demolishing houses on 15 March 2009. The community has expressed their preference for onsite upgrading, but has not heard anything further about these plans, nor where they should live while apartments are constructed for them.


Cambodia is a State party to the International Covenant on Economic Social Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Under Article 11 (1) ICESCR, all authorities in Cambodia are therefore obliged to refrain from the practice of forced evictions, and to prevent third parties, including private companies like Canadia Bank, from carrying out forced evictions. Evictions can only be justified under very exceptional circumstances. These include, among others, the conduct of meaningful consultation with all those affected and adequate compensation for the loss of homes and land.

I am convinced that this dispute can be resolved peacefully if the community is given the opportunity and time necessary to conduct fair negotiations. Taking time to reach a peaceful agreement between the parties in this case will clearly demonstrate the Government of Cambodia's consideration for its citizens and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Expressing our solidarity with the families, I therefore urge you to intervene in this matter and to ensure that no evictions take place, and instead peaceful negotiations continue between the residents of Reak Reay and Canadia Bank company until an acceptable agreement for compensation is reached.

I look forward to your response.

Respectfully yours,



Cesare Ottolini
coordinator of International Alliance of Inhabitants