

URGENT ACTION

FAMILIES EVICTED BY FORCE

At least 115 families were forcibly evicted on 9-10 October, and had their homes demolished, in a village in north-western Cambodia. All are now homeless; three villagers have been arrested, and one has been hospitalised after police violence.

A force of around 150 police, military police, forestry administration officials and hired workers demolished and burned the homes of at least 115 families on 9 October, mostly poor subsistence farmers, in O Bat Moan village in Oddar Meanchey province. It appears the eviction took place without a court order or judicial oversight. The security forces had blocked off the village, stopping human rights workers and journalists from monitoring the destruction.

Most of the women and children immediately took refuge at a nearby temple. Police and soldiers have tried to force them to leave, using threats and intimidation. Around 40 families are still sheltering at the temple, and others are staying with other families in the vicinity. They are struggling with shortages of food, water and medicine.

The vast majority of the men have fled the area. Police have arrested at least three people who were acting as village representatives. They have been taken to prison in Siem Reap province and are accused of incitement and breaches of the 2002 Forestry Law, but it is unclear if they have been charged with any crimes.

The forced eviction came after a land dispute with an agro-industrial company believed to be owned by ruling party Senator Ly Yong Phat, to whom the authorities leased the land in 2007. The company started clearing land in April 2008 for a sugar cane plantation. The villagers then complained to the authorities, claiming they had owned the land since 2003, when commune and district officials allotted to each family a small residential plot of land and five hectares of farm land. The local authorities have offered some land as compensation to 39 of the at least 115 families. All but two have rejected the offer.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY, in English, Khmer, French or your own language:

- Condemning the forced eviction in O Bat Moan village, Oddar Meanchey province, which has made at least 115 families homeless;
- Calling on the authorities to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the families and ensure they have access to adequate shelter, clean water, food and medical assistance;
- Calling on the authorities to take concrete steps to ensure the families receive adequate alternative accommodation and compensation;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full, effective and independent inquiry into the legality of the forced eviction and the violence used by the security forces, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to release the three people detained, if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Interior
Sar Kheng
 Ministry of Interior
 # 75 Norodom Blvd.
 Khan Chamkarmon
 Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Fax: +855 23 212708
Email: moi@interior.gov.kh
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hor Nam Hong
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 No.3, Samdech Hun Sen Street,
 Sangkat Tonle Bassac,
 Khan Chamcar Mon, Phnom Penh,
 Cambodia
Fax: + 855 23 216141 / 216144

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Cambodia is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and other international human rights treaties which prohibit forced eviction and related human rights violations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). It therefore has an obligation to stop forced evictions and to protect the population from forced evictions.

In 2008, Amnesty International received reports of about 27 forced evictions in Cambodia, affecting an estimated 23,000 people, most of them living in poverty. Some 150,000 Cambodians are known to be at risk of forced eviction in the wake of land disputes, land grabbing, agro-industrial and urban redevelopment projects.

Forced evictions are evictions carried out without adequate notice and consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation.

UA: 276/09 Index: ASA 23/021/2009 Issue Date: 14 October 2009

