

Joint Statement: Civil Society Strongly Condemns Violence Against Demonstrating Bus Drivers

We, the undersigned civil society groups, strongly condemn this morning's violence by members of the Cambodia for Confederation Development Association (CCDA) against protesting bus drivers and their supporters, as well as the woefully inadequate police response, call for the release of two men arbitrarily arrested and demand an investigation into the violence.

The brutal violence erupted this morning following a protest by bus drivers from the Cambodian Transport Workers Federation and their supporters from Cambodia Informal Worker Association. The incident has left at least 14 people injured, including protesting bus drivers and their supporters, one human rights monitor and one police officer. One individual suffered an arm fracture while many others have facial injuries from blows to the head.

At about 9.40am some of the 50 protesters, who had been demonstrating near the office of Capitol Tours Bus Company in Phnom Penh since 8am, attempted to block a bus from leaving the station. About 50 supporters of CCDA, many dressed in black clothing and wearing helmets, moved in to "protect the bus" and a stand-off ensued. Shortly after, some members of CCDA, wielding hammers, metal bars and sticks, charged into the crowd, savagely beating and kicking the striking bus drivers and their supporters. A number of anti-demonstration police joined in the beatings, while other police and CCDA members tried unsuccessfully to stop the violence.

The police then pushed back the bus drivers and their supporters and arrested one bus driver and one tuk-tuk driver, who was beaten in the process. They remain in detention, and could face charges. No members of CCDA were arrested, despite CCDA members openly attacking bus drivers and supporters with hammers and metal bars.

Following the attack, the bus drivers and supporters marched to two local police stations to lodge a complaint against the violence. At both stations, entrances were barred and police present refused to accept the complaint. Eventually anti-demonstration police arrived and dispersed the demonstrators.

"People were being beaten on the streets by armed thugs this morning, and the police made minimal efforts to stop it," said LICADHO Technical Coordinator Am Sam Ath. "No one responsible for today's attack has been arrested for the violence perpetrated by both thugs and the anti-demonstration police themselves."

Capitol bus drivers have been protesting for around two months after the dismissal of 45 bus drivers, who claim they were fired after trying to form a union. Following a request by City Hall that Capitol consider rehiring the drivers, the protesters temporarily halted demonstrations on January 26, only to resume again on February 1 after Capitol ignored City Hall's request.

The CCDA, a small tuk-tuk and motodop association, claim that bus drivers' protests are disrupting the tuk-tuk trade around Capitol bus station. The CCDA do not represent bus drivers and have no formal connection to the dispute. In September 2013, two participants in a CCDA protest reported to the media

that they had been promised money to participate, and had no knowledge as to what the protest was about.

“Today’s outrageous violence shows that workers cannot engage in public demonstrations without risk of arbitrary arrest – or even threats to their lives. It is further stark evidence of the authorities enabling and using utterly disproportionate violence with total impunity, in order to intimidate and disperse demonstrating workers,” said Moeun Tola, executive director of CENTRAL.

We reiterate our condemnation of the violence in the strongest possible terms, call for the immediate release of the arbitrarily detained victims and demand a prompt, independent and transparent investigation into today's events.

For more information, please contact:

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1. Boeung Kak Lake Community (BKL)
2. Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC)
3. CamASEAN Youth’s Future (CamASEAN)
4. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)
5. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
6. Cambodian Committee for Women (CAMBOW)
7. Cambodian Domestic Worker Network (CDWN)
8. Cambodian Food and Service Worker Federation (CFSWF)
9. Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)
10. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
11. Cambodian Independent Teachers Association (CITA)
12. Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC)
13. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
14. Cambodian Tourism and Service Workers Federation (CTSWF)
15. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
16. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
17. Cheko Community
18. Cambodia Legal Education Centre (CLEC)
19. Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Domestic Unions (C.CAWDU)
20. Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC)
21. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
22. Farmers Association for Peace and Development (FAPD)
23. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
24. Highlander Association (HA)
25. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
26. Independent Monk Network for Social Justice (IMNSJ)

27. Phnom Bat Community
28. Prek Takung Community
29. Prek Tanou Community
30. Prey Sala Thmey Community
31. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
32. 92 Community]
33. Cambodian Transport Workers Federation
34. Cambodia Informal Worker Association