

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

---

**CAMBODIA: 11 imprisoned peaceful protesters must be freed**

**Bangkok-Geneva-Paris-Phnom Penh, January 21, 2015 - Cambodia should overturn the conviction of human rights defenders jailed on November 11-12, 2014, and immediately and unconditionally release them, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a FIDH-OMCT joint program, said today. 10 human rights defenders and activist monk Venerable Seung Hai will appear before the Court of Appeals in Phnom Penh on January 22.**

On November 11, 2014, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced seven women, all human rights defenders from the Boeung Kak Lake (BKL) community, to a year imprisonment and a two-million riel (about US\$ 500) fine after finding them guilty on charges of obstructing public traffic under Article 78 of the Traffic Law. A day earlier, the seven women - **Nget Khun, Tep Vanny, Song Srey Leap, Kong Chantha, Phan Chhunreth, Po Chorvy**, and **Nong Sreng** – had held a peaceful protest in Phnom Penh to draw attention to the negative consequences of a construction project being developed in their community.

Three more women human rights defenders - **Heng Pich, Im Srey Touch**, and **Phoung Sopheap** - and Buddhist monk Venerable Seung Hai from Stung Meanchey Pagoda were sentenced to a year imprisonment and a two-million riel (about US\$ 500) fine on charges of aggravated obstruction of public officials under Article 504 of the Criminal Code. The four had gathered outside of Phnom Penh Municipal Court a day earlier to protest the arrest of the seven BKL women human rights defenders.

***“The summary, arbitrary, and disproportionate jail sentences against the 11 defendants should be quashed. It’s time for Cambodia’s courts to act professionally and independently from the executive and stop the judicial harassment of land rights defenders and peaceful protesters,”*** said FIDH President Karim Lahidji.

The 10 human rights defenders and Venerable Seung Hai are currently detained in Prey Sar Correctional Center in Phnom Penh. One of the women from BKL, Phan Chhunreth, is in poor health condition and has been repeatedly hospitalized for a heart problem since her detention.

***“The Court of Appeal must not miss the opportunity to redress a blatant injustice and order the release of the 10 human rights defenders and Venerable Seung Hai who should not have been detained in the first place,”*** said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

**For more information, please contact:**

- FIDH: Arthur Manet/Audrey Couprie: + 33 (0) 1 43 55 25 18
- OMCT: Miguel Martin Zumalacarregui: +41 22 809 49 24