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Ambassadors

Accredited to The Royal Kingdom of Cambodia
(22 ambassadors - referenced below)

22 June 2012

Dear His/Her Excellency:

Re: Request for observers to be sent to the appeal trial of the Boeung Kak Lake human rights defenders

We, the undersigned human rights organisations, are writing to encourage you to send high level observers to attend the June 27, 2012 appeal hearing for the 13 female Boeung Kak Lake land and housing rights activists. They were charged, tried, convicted, and sentenced on May 24, 2012 solely as a result of exercising their fundamental right to freedoms of expression.

The women are part of the 'Boeung Kak Lake 15', which refers to 15 land and housing rights activists (14 women and one man) who have been actively protesting the forced evictions of the Boeung Kak Lake community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. 13 women were arrested on May 22, 2012 during a peaceful protest on the site of demolished homes at the former lake. On May 24, just 48 hours after their arrests, all 13 were subjected to an approximately three-hour long mass trial. The women's lawyers' requests for time to prepare the case, examine the case file, speak with their clients, and call witnesses were all denied. These fair trial rights are not only expressly guaranteed under Cambodia's own Constitution and Code of Criminal Procedure, they are also guaranteed under international treaties which Cambodia has ratified.

Two additional community representatives who were prepared to testify on behalf of the 13 women were arrested outside the court room during the trial. They were charged with the same crimes and detained.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the May 24 trial, all 13 women received sentences of 2.5 years each, with some portions of six of their sentences suspended. The two representatives arrested during the trial have recently been released and are under judicial supervision awaiting their trial. Further details about the case can be found in the briefing paper attached to this letter.

An appeal hearing for the 13 has been set for **7.30 a.m. on June 27 at the appellate court (court is located on the riverside just south of the Royal Palace)**. We are of the view that strong international pressure and interest in the case will improve the women's chance of receiving a fair trial. The presence of international observers from donor governments and the international community more generally will add significant support to calls for a hearing that follows the rule of law and international human rights standards.

Moreover, we consider that the case against the women should in fact be dismissed and that they should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Suppression of activists and community members opposing forced evictions and land grabbing appears to be increasing should the convictions of the 13 Boeung Kak Lake activists stand, the case will serve as a warning to other human rights defenders and embolden those governments, corporations and individuals perpetrating forced evictions and other human rights violations.

We sincerely appreciate the contribution your presence at the trial would make in the defence of human rights.

For more information including articles, photos and video please visit The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) website: <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org> and the Free the 15! Blog: <http://freethe15.wordpress.com>.

We look forward to receiving your response to our letter.

Sincerely,

Kate Lappin
Regional Coordinator
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and
Development (APWLD)

Donna J Guest
Deputy Director, Asia Pacific
Amnesty International

Brittis Edman
Southeast Asia Programme Director
Civil Rights Defenders

Brad Adams
Director, Asia Division
Human Rights Watch

Daniel Calingaert
Vice President, Policy and External Affairs
Freedom House

Yap Swee Seng
Executive Director
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development

Yvette J. Alberdingk Thijm
Executive Director
WITNESS

The letter is addressed to 22 Ambassadors based in Phnom Penh or Bangkok, representing following countries or delegation:

*Ambassador Penny Richards
The **Australian** Embassy, Phnom Penh*

*Ambassador Ignazio di Pace
The Embassy of **Italy**, Bangkok*

*Ambassador Mark Gooding
The **British** Embassy, Phnom Penh*

*Ambassador Masafumi Kuroki
The Embassy of **Japan**, Phnom Penh*

Ambassador Rudi Veestraeten
*The **Belgian** Embassy, Bangkok*

Chargé des Affaires Svilen Popov
*Embassy of the Republic of **Bulgaria**,*
Phnom Penh

Ambassador Ron Hoffmann
*The Embassy of **Canada**, Bangkok*

Ambassador Mikael Hemniti Winther
*The Royal **Danish** Embassy, Bangkok*

Ambassador Jean-François Cautain
*The Delegation of the **European Union**,*
Phnom Penh

Ambassador Sirpa Mäenpää
*The Embassy of **Finland**, Bangkok*

Ambassador Christian CONNAN
*The Embassy of **France**, Phnom Penh*

Ambassador Wolfgang Moser
*The **German** Embassy, Phnom Penh*

Ambassador Yael Rubinstein
*The Embassy of **Israel**, Bangkok*

Ambassador Joan A. Boer
*Embassy of the Kingdom of the **Netherlands**,*
Bangkok

Ambassador Tony Lynch
*The **New Zealand** Embassy, Bangkok*

Ambassador Katja Christina Nordgaard
*The Royal **Norwegian** Embassy, Bangkok*

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*The Embassy of the Republic of **Poland**, Bangkok*

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*The **Russian** Embassy, Phnom Penh*

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*The Embassy of **Spain**, Phnom Penh*

Ambassador Anne Höglund
*The **Swedish** Embassy, Phnom Penh*

Ambassador Christoph Burgener
*The **Swiss** Embassy, Bangkok*

Ambassador William E. Todd
*The Embassy of the **United States**, Phnom Penh*