**JOINT STATEMENT**

**THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY AND VIOLENCE MUST STOP**

**Phnom Penh, 30th May 2012** - We, Cambodian and International civil society organizations represented in this statement, condemn the use of armed force and escalating violence against citizens peacefully defending their land, labor and natural resources rights. We are referring to not only the events earlier last week on 22nd May, when dozens of peaceful Boeung Kak Lake (BKL) protestors were violently dispersed and two days later when fifteen (fourteen women and one male) BKL residents were sent to Prey Sar prison and charged of unfounded criminal offenses, but also the recent shooting incidents—the killings of environmental activist Chut Wutty in Koh Kong province and 14-year old girl Heng Chantha in Kratie province, and the shooting of three young women protesting for better working conditions in Svay Rieng province. These incidents are particularly disturbing because they indicate an increasing readiness on the part of security and military forces to use lethal force against civilians.

The year 2012 has already witnessed at least five such instances, not including numerous other human rights abuses. We are deeply concerned, shocked and saddened about this escalation of violence, particularly in disputes related to Economic Land Concessions (ELCs). Pursuant to Article 41 of the Cambodian Constitution and international conventions to which Cambodia is a party, all citizens enjoy a fundamental right to free expression, which includes the right to protect against decisions of public authorities that infringe on their rights and livelihood. In practice, the exercise of this right is all too often denied or met with violent repression.

Cambodian citizens have a right to live under the rule of law. They deserve to be protected, served with dignity and fairness based on universally agreed basic rights. Public authorities not only have a duty and obligation to ensure that a culture of impunity is never condoned but also must make fighting against impunity a priority. All instances involving the use of firearms against civilians should be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated. Investigations that find shootings to be "accidental" or the result of low-ranking officers acting on their own initiative should be supported by evidence gathered in a rigorous, transparent manner. At the very least, protection against threats and intimidation should be provided to witnesses and all victims should have access to effective judicial verdict and justice.

The recent shootings took place despite the fact that Prime Minister Hun Sen has made an announcement prohibiting the use of firearms against protestors and issued a moratorium on the granting of ELCs. Civil society organizations welcome the Prime Minister’s much needed directives, which work to improve human rights in Cambodia. However, the Prime Minister’s directives should be followed by detailed, binding regulations that highlight how public authorities—both local and provincial and armed forces—should thoroughly and systematically implement these directives.

It is necessary to fully review all existing concessions to ensure they all are fully compliant with relevant national and international legal frameworks. Gaps in resources or technical capacity should be identified and addressed, and the implementation of these decisions should be monitored and reported to the public.

We, the 122 undersigned civil society organizations, believe that violence against citizens is never acceptable and should cease immediately and will also continue to monitor individual cases related to land, labor and natural resources abuses. In addition, we will seek to engage the Royal Government of Cambodia with the aim to strengthen the rule of law and to break the current cycle of violence and impunity.

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1. The Phnom Penh Post, Friday, 25th May 2012 Page 1, 2
2. The Phnom Penh Post, Friday 27th April 2012, Page 1, 2
3. The Cambodian Daily, Thursday 17th May 2012
4. The Cambodian Daily, Wednesday, 1st February 2012, Page 1, 2
5. Royal Government of Cambodia, No.01 BB, 07th of May, Directive on Measures to Strengthen and Enhance the Effectiveness of the Economic Land Concession Management

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To contact any of the undersigned organizations, please communicate with:

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2. Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), House 9-11, Street 476, Touk Tompoung 1, Chamkamorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Tel: (+855)23 214 152, Fax: (+855) 23 216 009, email: info@ccc-cambodia.org, web: www.ccc-cambodia.org
3. Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC), Address: # 9E0, St. 330, Boeung Keng Kong III, Chamkamorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Tel: (+855) 23 301 415, Fax: (+855) 23 218 759, email: chrac@forum.org.kh, web: www.chrac.org
This statement is endorsed by the following Cambodian and International Civil Society Organizations:

1. 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN)
2. Action for Environment and Communities (AEC)
3. Action for Research and Development (ARD)
4. ActionAid International-Cambodia
5. Advocacy and Policy Institute (API)
6. Affiliated Network for Social Accountability-East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP CAMBODIA)
7. Aide Et Action International-Cambodia
8. Alliance Action for Rural Restoration Organization (AARR)
10. Assistance to Poor Children’s Agency (APCA)
11. Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
12. Banteay Srei (BS)
13. Buddhism for Development (BFD)
14. Building Communities Voices (BCV)
15. Burma Partnership
16. Cambodia Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC)
17. Cambodia’s Media Forum on Environment (CMFE)
18. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
19. Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR)
20. Cambodian Children’s Trust (CCT)
21. Cambodian Civil Society Partnership (CCSP)
22. Cambodian Defenders Project (CDP)
23. Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF)
24. Cambodian HIV/AIDS Education and Care (CHEC)
25. Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)
26. Cambodian Human Rights and Development (ADHOC)
27. Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)
28. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
29. Cambodian Mental Health Nurses Association (CMHNA)
30. Cambodian National Research Organization (CNRO)
31. Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT)
32. Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS)
33. Cambodian Worker Center for Development (DWCD)
34. Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children’s Rights (CCPCR)
35. Center for Advanced Study (CAS)
36. Child Hope Cambodia
37. Children and Life Association (CLA)
38. Children Development Association (CDA)
39. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)
40. Christians for Social Justice (CSJ)
41. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)
42. Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC)
43. Community Capacities for Development (CCD)
44. Community Economic Development (CED)
45. Community Empowerment and Development Team (CEDT)
46. Community Managed Development Partners (CMDP)
47. Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)
48. Concern Worldwide Cambodia
49. Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)
50. CORD South & East Asia
51. Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)
52. DanChurchAid/ChristianAid
53. Danmission-Cambodia
54. Development and Partnership in Action (DPA)

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55) Development and Peace-Canada
56) Diakonia
57) Elephant Livelihood Initiative Environment (ELIE)
58) Environment and Society Organization (ESO)
59) Environmental Protection and Development Organization (EPDO)
60) Equitable Cambodia
61) Farmer of Cambodia Organization (FOC)
62) Forum Syd
63) Friends of the Earth Indonesia (WALHI)-based in Indonesia
64) Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADDC)
65) Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cambodia
66) Highlander Association (HA)
67) Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF)
68) ICCO & KIA Southeast Asia and Pacific
69) Inclusive Development International
70) Independent Democracy of Informal Economic Association (IDEA)
71) Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO)
72) Indigenous Rights Active Members (IRAM)
73) International Center for Conciliation (ICfC)
74) Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
75) Jesuit Service Cambodia
76) Kelompok Studi Konservasi (KSK)- based in Indonesia
77) Khmer Institute for National Development (KIND)
78) Khmer Youth Association (KYA)
79) Korean Missionary Society (KMS)
80) Krom Akphiwat Phum (KAWP)
81) Kunathor (TNK)
82) LICADHO Canada
83) Life with Dignity (LWD)
84) Mercy Teams International
85) Mlup Baitong (MB)
86) My Village (MV)
87) Neak Poan Organization For Development (NOP)
88) Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFIC)
89) NGO Committee on the Rights of the Child (NGOCRC)
90) NGO Education Partnership (NEP)
91) NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)
92) Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)
93) Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA)-Cambodia
94) Operations Enfants du Cambodge (OEC)
95) Organization to Promote Kuy Culture (OPKC)
96) Partnership for Development in Cambodia (PADEK)
97) People in Need Cambodia (PIN-Cambodia)
98) People’s Action for Change (PAC)
99) Phum Baitong
100) Ponleu Ney Kdey SangKhum (PNKS)
101) Ponlok Khmer (PKH) based in Preah Vihear
102) RACHANA
103) Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC)
104) Riverkids Foundation
105) Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
106) Save the Children
107) Servants of Cambodia
108) Silaka
109) Social Action for Change (SAC)
110) STAR Kampuchea
111) Strey Khmer Organization (SKO)
112) The Cambodian Center for the Protection of the Children’s Rights (CCPCR)
113) Trócaire
114) Urban Poor Development Fund (UPWD)
115) Village Focus Cambodia (VFC)

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