



## **CALD YOUTH STATEMENT ON CAMBODIAN ENVIRONMENTAL WITCH HUNT**

Cambodian officials issued arrest warrants for three of the four activists from Mother Nature, and charged them with “plotting” a charge introduced in 2018 used as a tool to silence dissent against former opposition officials who can face 5 to 10 years imprisonment. According to Khieu Sopheak, the official spokesperson from the Interior Ministry, he alleged the group to be rebellious, who used foreign money to topple the Cambodian government.

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) identified the three who was arrested as Sun Ratha, Ly Chandaravuth, and Seth Chhivlimeng. A fourth environmental activist, Yim Leanghy, arrested in Kandal province after being asked to visit his local police station, according to a statement from the rights group. The four activists were arrested after they documented sewage waste run-off into Phnom Penh’s Tonle Sap river near Royal Palace, CCHR added.

According to Mother Nature co-founder Alejandro Gonzalez-Davidson, who was deported in 2015 for criticizing plans for a controversial dam, “the government is a “paranoid dictatorship” who believes in conspiracies that enemies are trying to topple their regime, when in reality only a few young Cambodians were trying to create environmental awareness”

CALD Youth condemns these unlawful detentions and arrests of environmental rights activists. We call on the Cambodian government to respect the rule of law, to adhere to democratic norms, and to release the three environmental activists, together with the hundreds of arrested political activists.

CALD Youth is also alarmed with the measures that the Cambodian Government uses to silence dissent among its citizens. We call on the Cambodian Government to follow its constitution and to bring back Cambodia’s true democracy.

We urge the Cambodian Government be good examples to the youth as law-abiding citizens. These political persecutions in Cambodia will further affect the youth - economically, emotionally and mentally.

CALD Youth was organized to create regional solidarity among the liberal youth community on issues relating to the violation of liberty, democracy, and equality. We call on our members around the region to speak up on these injustices and to stand up for our values.

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