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# Eviction and Land Grabbing Surges Across Cambodia

ចេញផ្សាយ ថ្ងៃ ខែ មេសា ឆ្នាំ ២០១០

The use of military police by government-affiliated companies and individuals to forcibly evict villagers featured prominently in land grabbing cases in first quarter of 2010, leaving over 2,500 families at risk of losing their homes or livelihood.



24 March 2010 - Police face-off with villagers as they attempt to gather outside the Kompong Speu provincial court

LICADHO received 23 complaints of land grabbing between January and March 2010, ten of which involved the violent eviction of individuals following the grant of economic land concessions by government ministers to relatives or elites, and their affiliated companies.

In 25 percent of the land grabbing cases, individuals and organizations accused of land grabbing have used sponsored military police units to threaten, intimidate and arrest land activists and community representatives involved in land disputes, and to prevent peaceful demonstrations by villagers.

The sheer volume of land granted by economic land concessions in the following three high profile cases highlights how the government-affiliated individuals and organizations are increasingly resorting to intimidation, violence and control of police and military units to grab land occupied by villagers.

## Kompong Speu's Thpong District

2,000 hectares of land belonging to more than 300 villagers in 10 villages was confiscated on 23 September 2009 by Okhna Ly Yong Phat, a Senator from the ruling Cambodian People's Party, for use as a sugar plantation. Ly Yong Phat Company was granted 9,052 hectares of land by the government as an economic land concession, affecting families in the Thpong district's Omlaing commune.

The villagers were offered ♦ and refused ♦ a paltry sum \$100 to \$200 per hectare to abandon their farms and livelihoods. The villagers started to protest after they saw bulldozers and tractors clearing their farmlands in Omlaing commune, Thpong district.

On 17 March 2010, more than 30 soldiers from RCAF's 313 battalion were deployed on the concession area where a number of violations occurred. The battalion is one of the military units officially sponsored by the Senator Ly Yong Phat in a patronage system, whereby private companies can sponsor specific military units.

On 18 March 2010, some 500 villagers staged a protest to stop workers of the company from clearing the land but failed to do so. Villagers then torched two makeshift shelters owned by the company.

Community representative Khem Vuthy and commune council member You Tho were then summoned for questioning at Kompong Speu provincial court on 18 March 2010. On 24 March 2010 they were detained and charged with incitement, colluding to set the structures on fire, and colluding to incite violence. Two other men were also summoned for questioning over the incident, but went into hiding after Mr. You and Mr. Vuthy were arrested.

The two representatives appeared in court on 24 March 2010. The same day, more than 500 villagers drove for hours on farming trucks to Kompong Speu town, so that they could support their community representatives. Numerous eyewitnesses have claimed that the men were not present when the structures were burnt to the ground. Mixed police lined their path, and reported the group's progress to their superiors.

Early the next day, hundreds of other villagers headed to Kompong Speu town to also show support. At least three of them were beaten by police and seven others suffered minor injuries. Other villagers from the same group were prevented from reaching the town altogether, with police disabling the engine of one farmer's truck. This conduct by police intimidated the villagers and severely restricted their freedom of movement and assembly.

On 26 March 2010, more than 600 villagers gathered on National Road 4, blocking the road for almost two hours, and demanded the release of their two representatives, Khem Vuthy and You Tho. This led to

heavy traffic congestion and prompted the deputy provincial governor, court officials and provincial police commissioner to talk with villagers. After lengthy negotiations, the villagers agreed to move and discuss the matter at the provincial court.

On 29 March 2010 Mr. You and Mr. Vuthy were released on bail and placed under surveillance.

### **Kompong Thom's Kraya Commune**

In 2007, an economic land concession of 8,100 hectares in Kraya commune, Santuk district, Kompong Thom province was granted by government to the Vietnamese Tan Bien-Kompong Thom Rubber Development Company, leaving 1,362 families under threat of forced eviction.

On 6 December 2009, military and local police surrounded the community and forced them to thumbprint documents stating families agree to relocate. The forces blocked anyone from entering the site (including families with houses in the disputed area).

This happened as a group of about 100 villagers, who had traveled to Phnom Penh to file a complaint with the Prime Minister, were forced into trucks and driven back to Santuk district. The villagers were forced to disembark in Sang Kreang pagoda and were prevented from returning to their homes in the disputed area.

On 6 March 2010, over 50 families went to meet with the land distribution committee appointed by the company to demand their farmland but the Company refused and advised the villagers that the committee had been cancelled. They then travelled to Banteay Roveang, Kraya commune, where they were blocked and surrounded by more than 20 policemen. One police man shot at villagers, causing three people to be hospitalized at Kompong Cham provincial hospital with serious injuries.

Tan Bien-Kompong Thom Rubber Development Company has signed a contract to lease 8,100 hectares of land in Kompong Thom province for a rubber plantation and the building of a rubber latex plant. The contract will be valid for 70 years and is running under a cooperation program of the Vietnamese and Cambodian governments.

### **Kompong Speu's Aoral District**

In early 2009, the Singaporean company H.L.H. Agriculture demarcated roughly 10,000 hectares of land within the Aoral Wildlife Sanctuary in Aoral district, Kompong Speu. The demarcated area surrounds five villages which form the core community of an indigenous group, the Suys, and overlaps with forestry communities and farming land of the indigenous group.

On 3 March 2009, the H.L.H Agriculture Company was authorized by the government to establish corn plantations on 9,985 hectares of land based in Sas village, Sangke Satob commune and Trapeang Chour commune, Oral district, Kompong Speu.

In early May 2009, Singaporean H.L.H Agriculture company started excavating the forest land used by 350 families of the Suy community from the five villages affected.

On 4 June 2009, over 400 Suys - mostly women - protested the clearing of their farming fields by the company to build irrigation canals, pushing the machinery and workers out of the area.

On 21 December 2009, over a hundred Suys mobilized once more to stop the renewed clearing of the community's farming land by the company that was attempting to construct a road. After a day of protest and night vigil, Aoral district deputy governor Moang Thy visited the area alongside the Trapeang Chour commune chief and asked for the company to move away.

Throughout January 2010, similar face-offs happened. Every time, a little more land was cleared and lost to the company.

The Suys people are only found in Cambodia. According to knowledgeable community elders, there are only 1,200 Suys left in Cambodia, and thus the world.

Most Suys reside in five neighbouring villages in Kompong Speu's Aoral district: Putrea village, Ta Nel village, Kao Doun Tei village, Traang village, and Chambak village. Encroachments on their land constitute a serious threat to their survival as a people.

LICADHO reiterates its call for the government to ensure that land disputes are peacefully and fairly resolved.

**ការឃ្នាំមើលចំនួនអ្នកទោស**

**12,784**

អត្រាបង្កើន: **→153%**

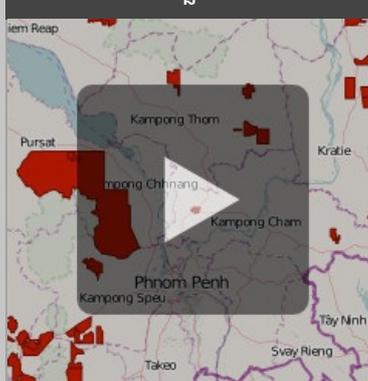
ចុះត្រង់នេះសម្រាប់របាយការណ៍ចុងក្រោយនៃចំនួនអ្នកទោសក្នុងប្រទេសកម្ពុជាដែលបានចេញថ្ងៃទី៣១ ខែសីហា ឆ្នាំ ២០១៤ ដែលបានមកពីព្រឹត្តិការណ៍ដែលបានឃ្នាំមើលដោយសីកាដ

**មាតិកាសម្លេង**



ស្តាប់មាតិកាសម្លេងថ្មីបំផុតរបស់ សីកាដ ស្តីអំពីការបោះឆ្នោតជាតិឆ្នាំ ២០១៣

**ការផ្តល់ដីសម្បទាន**



ការពិនិត្យមើលការផ្តល់ដីសម្បទានដែលមានពីមុនមកដល់សព្វថ្ងៃ

**ការធ្វើច្បាប់បំបិទមាត់**



និយមន័យនៃ “បទល្មើស” នៅកម្ពុជា