

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Video Intervention: Check against delivery

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Item: Item 10: Interactive Dialogue, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia

Date: 1 October 2020

Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 45th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Mme. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada thanks the Special Rapporteur for her work. We underscore the finding in her summary report¹ that Cambodia has made "little or no progress" to implement her recommendations over the past five years.

A legitimate parliament and justice system are vital to the fulfilment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for all. Gaps in fair and equal access to justice are conspicuous at this time of rising unrest about unequal impacts of economic stress on people facing poverty, debt, and landlessness.²

Through its one-party parliament and executive-controlled legal system, Cambodia impedes access to equal justice by making and misusing laws that violate public participation rights and freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. The recent crackdown on dissenters includes dozens of arbitrary detentions of political activists, journalists, unionists, environmentalists, and defenders.³ Human rights will remain unfulfilled until Cambodia establishes genuine independence and integrity of the judiciary, legal profession, and other institutions in line with its international obligations.

LRWC asks that all States urgently call on Cambodia to implement its rights obligations including the Special Rapporteur's recommendations. We would welcome the Special Rapporteur's advice about her priorities for the coming year and how States and civil society can best support effective fulfilment of her mandate.

Thank you.

¹ The Special Rapporteur's full report was not available at the time this statement was finalized. This statement draws on the Special Rapporteur Summary report, September 2020, https://extranet.ohchr.org/sites/hrc/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/45session/DL_Reports_Special_Procedures/unsr%20cambodia%202020%20one%20page%20rev%20copy.docx (user: hrc extranet, password lsession).

² Matt Blomberg, Mech Dara, Land to lose: coronavirus compounds debt crisis in Cambodia, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-finance-loans/land-to-lose-coronavirus-compounds-debt-crisis-in-cambodia-idUSKCN26C02S>.

³ OHCHR, Press briefing notes on Cambodia: Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Ravina Shamdasani, 11 September 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26223&LangID=E>.