

Joint Statement

An Ongoing Shame: Mother Nature Convictions, One Year On

2 July 2025

Today marks one year spent behind bars for Long Kunthea, Ly Chandaravuth, Phuon Keoraksmeay, Thun Ratha, and Yim Leanghy, the five Mother Nature Cambodia activists arrested and sentenced to between six and eight years in prison after their environmental activism resulted in baseless charges of "plotting against the state" and, for Leanghy, insulting the king.

The activists were convicted by the Phnom Penh Capital Court in July 2024 and have since had their requests for bail while they appeal the verdict denied by the Appeal Court and Supreme Court. One year ago, we called this decision [shameful](#), because caring for Cambodia's forests, mangroves, beaches, and water should never be mislabelled as an attack against the state. These activists must be immediately released, with all charges against them dropped.

The five activists, along with five fellow environmentalists who were convicted *in absentia*, were working to protect the natural resources that should be conserved for all Cambodians to enjoy. In doing so, they took on powerful interests who seek to destroy the environment in pursuit of profit and put themselves at great personal risk for the benefit all Cambodians.

The Mother Nature activists remain strong and committed to protecting the country's natural resources, but their sacrifice has been met with pain and cruelty. Shortly after the verdict, the government sent the activists to five far-flung prisons, hundreds of kilometres from each other, their families and lawyers. This unjustified and inhumane treatment is in clear violation of UN rules on the treatment of prisoners, and continues to weigh on their families, lawyers, and mental health.

The activists have now spent birthdays and holidays behind bars. Chandaravuth, 24, Kunthea, 26, and Keoraksmeay, 23, should be spending their youth among friends and family, yet it has been robbed from them by the unjust verdict. Ratha, 32, and Leanghy, 36, both missed the births of their daughters due to being imprisoned. While their sons and daughters are growing up without their fathers, we hope they will one day understand that their fathers' sacrifice was made in the hope of building a better Cambodia for them, and for all Cambodian children.

We maintain hope that this injustice will be reversed. There is still time for national and international partners who care about Cambodia's environment to speak up and urge the government to drop the charges and release the activists. The Appeal Court has indefinitely postponed the activists' appeal of the conviction, which was initially scheduled for late last month. We call on the courts to expedite the appeal process and to render a fair and impartial verdict, restoring the rights and freedom of these environmental activists.

These activists should never have been imprisoned. These young men and women pose no threat to the Cambodian state. If the government wants to show that they truly wish to protect Cambodia's environment, they should embrace and celebrate Mother Nature Cambodia's work and end the cruel punishment of their activism.

The statement endorsed by:

1. 185K Thida Chambork Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
2. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
3. AmLeang Community (Kampong Speu)
4. Boeung Pi Community (Battambang)
5. Boeung Pram Community (Battambang)
6. Bos Snor Community (Tbong Khmum)
7. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)

8. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
9. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
10. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
11. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
12. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
13. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF)
14. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
15. Chi Kha Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong)
16. Community to Protect Nature (Pursat)
17. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
18. Dak Por village, Krang Dei Vay commune, Phnum Sruoch district, Kampong Speu
19. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
20. Federation of Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC)
21. Federation Union of Free and Independent (FUF)
22. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
23. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE)
24. Klaing Toek 78 Community (Siem Reap)
25. Kbal Kla Forestry Community (Kampong Thom)
26. Kouy Indigenous Community in Prame Commune (Preah Vihear)
27. Kouy Indigenous Community (Preah Vihear)
28. Kouy Indigenous Community in Ngan commune (Kampong Thom)
29. Labour Right Supported Union Khmer Employee of Nagaworld (LRSU)
30. Land Community (Pailin)
31. Lor Peang Community (Kampong Chhnang)
32. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
33. Nature Protection Odom Sre Pors Community (forest)
34. Ou Bat Moan Community (Oddar Meanchey)
35. Partnership for Environment and Development (PED Cambodia)
36. Phnom Krom Community (Siem Reap)
37. Phum Seila Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
38. Prey Chher Pech Changvar Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
39. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
40. Rattanak Rokha Forestry Community (Oddar Meanchey)
41. Reaksmei Sameakki Community (Kampong Speu)
42. Samaki Sangkae Pir Mean Rith (Preah Vihear)
43. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut Organisation (STT)
44. Srae Prang Land Community (Tboung Khmum)
45. Stueng Khsach Sa Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
46. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
47. Thnaot Chum Land Community (Pursat)
48. Trapeang Chan Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
49. Trapeang Chour Community (Kampong Speu)