

Repeal the Nationality Law Amendments: How Revoking Cambodian Nationality Fails to Meet International Standards

Phnom Penh, 9 September 2025

The Cambodian government's amendments to the Nationality Law enable it to arbitrarily strip Cambodians of their citizenship, potentially making some stateless. The grounds for stripping nationality are outlined under the new Article 29 of the law, with specific procedures for doing so to be outlined by sub-decree. In this statement, we will explain how and why these amendments are overly broad and vague, in violation of international law and norms.

The Nationality Law amendments were enacted today, following calls from Senate President Hun Sen and a Constitutional Amendment on 15 July 2025 enabling their passage. Fifty civil society groups have already [raised the alarm](#) about the devastating impacts these amendments will have, including the potential for misuse and the chilling effect among activists and the public, who risk being stripped of both their fundamental rights and their identity.

The Right to Nationality

Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to nationality and that no one shall be "arbitrarily deprived" of their nationality. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration contains a similar provision under Article 18, as do other core human rights treaties ratified by Cambodia, which are recognized in national law through Article 31 of the Constitution.

To avoid being "arbitrary" under international law, the deprivation of nationality must be:

- **Predictable and uphold due process of law** - Is there a clear and specific set of laws and regulations governing the action? Is there a proper process in place for carrying it out?
- **Necessary** - Is there any other less severe or restrictive action that could be taken to address the issue?
- **Proportional** - Is the action an appropriate and measured response?
- **Reasonable and Objective** - Are there substantive grounds for the action?
- **Non-Discriminatory** - Can the action be used to discriminate against someone, including based on their political opinion, ethnicity or other status?

Cambodia's new amendments to the Nationality Law comply with none of these requirements. Article 29 of the Nationality Law allows for revocation of citizenship based on overly vague and broad terms without clear definitions, such as:

- "Committing acts of treason ... or conspiring with foreigners causing harm to the core interests of the Kingdom of Cambodia,"
- "Committing acts which cause harm to national sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security"; and
- "Being convicted of a felony or misdemeanour related to abuse of the King, affecting the security of the State, or acts of terrorism."

The phrasing of these offenses is broad and subjective, providing no **predictability** and leaving wide space for misinterpretation and misuse. For example, the first two offenses do not require a criminal conviction or examination of evidence; they only require "committing" an offense or "conspiring" to "cause harm." This means there is no **due process**, and no procedure for establishing **reasonable and objective** grounds, for example by presenting evidence to prove these offenses. Due process also requires that decisions revoking citizenship be issued in writing and be subject to appeal before an independent body with the power to order

reparations. Cambodia's law contains no requirement that decisions be issued in writing, and provides no avenue to challenge decisions.

Predictability is further undermined by the use of vague terms such as “national core interests”, “national security”, or “harm to the security of the state” – all of which could be interpreted in many ways. In recent years, [environmental activists](#) testing river water for pollution have been accused of harming national security. If such broad accusations can result in losing citizenship, how can anyone be sure what actions will lead to an arbitrary loss of nationality?

In addition, the law is not **necessary** or **proportional**. Under international law, the removal of nationality is considered a measure of last resort. It can only be used when all other measures are unable to achieve the state's goals. There has been no argument put forth as to why Criminal Code charges are not enough to address national security concerns.

The law also fails to prohibit **discrimination based on political opinions, ethnicity or other status**. Recent convictions of political and social activists on charges involving national security and treason suggest that there is a high risk of discrimination when implementing this law. Yet the amended law contains no clear statement that no Cambodian citizen will lose their citizenship due to their political opinions, ethnicity, or other characteristics protected under international law.

In addition, those stripped of their citizenship under the newly amended law may end up stateless, which itself can be a violation of international law. The amendments enable Cambodian citizenship to be removed if “there is a reliable basis to believe that the Cambodian national can obtain another nationality or protection from a foreign state.” The provision is vague and unpredictable, with no clear definition of the circumstances in which it would be reasonable to “believe” a person can obtain another nationality.

The removal of citizenship in Cambodia carries harsh and significant consequences. It erases the foundation of the person's right to own land, to access healthcare, to go to school, to marry, to work legally, to participate in politics, and to travel in and out of the country.

These amendments risk arbitrarily stripping Cambodians of their nationality and fundamental rights, with a far-reaching chilling effect on freedom of expression. We urge the Cambodian government to immediately revoke these amendments.

This statement endorsed by:

1. 185K Thida Chambork Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
2. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
3. Amleang Community (Kampong Speu)
4. Association to Support Vulnerable Women (ASVW)
5. Bos Snor Communiy (Tboung Khmum)
6. Boeung Pi Community (Battambang)
7. Boeung Pram Community (Battambang)
8. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU)
9. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
10. Cambodia Institute for Democracy (CID)
11. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
12. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF)
13. Cambodian Youth Network Association (CYN)
14. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
15. Chi Kha Kraom Community (Koh Kong)
16. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)

17. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
18. Community to Protect Nature (Pursat)
19. Dak Por Community (Kampong Speu)
20. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
21. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
22. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE)
23. Kbal Kla Forestry Community (Kampong Thom)
24. Klaing Toek 78 Community (Siem Reap)
25. Kuy Indigenous Community in Ngan Commune (Kampong Thom)
26. Kuy Indigenous Community in Prame Commune (Preah Vihear)
27. Kuy Indigenous Community (Preah Vihear)
28. Labor Rights Supported Union Khmer Employees of Naga World (L.R.S.U)
29. Land Community (Pailin)
30. Lor Peang Community (Kampong Chhnang)
31. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
32. Mean Chey Land Community (Svay Rieng)
33. Nature Protection Oudom Sre Pors Community (Kampong Speu)
34. Ou Bat Moan Community (Oddar Meanchey)
35. Partnership for Environment and Development Organization (PED Cambodia)
36. People Center for Development and Peace-Center (PDP-Center)
37. Phnom Krom Community (Siem Reap)
38. Phum Seila Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
39. Pongrok Chey Leak community (Kampot)
40. Ponlok Khmer (PKH)
41. Prey Chher Pech Changvar Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
42. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
43. Rattanak Rokha Forestry Community (Oddar Meanchey)
44. Reaksmei Sameakki Community (Kampong Speu)
45. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut Organisation (STT)
46. Samaki Sangkae Pir Mean Rith (Preah Vihear)
47. Sre Ampel Water Fall Tourism Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
48. Srae Prang Land Community (Tboung Khmum)
49. Stueng Khsach Sa Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
50. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
51. Thnaot Chum Land Community (Pursat)
52. Tonlung Community (Tboung Khmum)
53. Trapeang Chan Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
54. Trapeang Chour Community (Kampong Speu)