



Stockholm, 10 February 2014

H. E. Hun Sen, Prime Minister
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia

Respect Workers' Rights in Cambodia

Your excellency,

On behalf of The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO, I write to condemn the violence perpetrated by members of the police and armed forces against striking garment workers.

In December 2013, the government announced a new minimum wage increase, one that fell far below a living wage. The original offer of \$95 (now \$100) per month is truly insufficient to satisfy the basic needs of any Cambodian worker. It is also incompatible with Article 104 of the Cambodian Labour Code, which guarantees the payment of a wage that “must ensure every worker of a decent standard of living compatible with human dignity”.

Workers decided to withhold their labour on 24 December, as is their fundamental right under international law and the Cambodian Labour Code, to campaign for a higher minimum wage. Instead of negotiating with workers, the government decided to resort to violence and intimidation. Heavily armed police and soldiers have repeatedly mobilized in early January to quash the protests, leading to violent and bloody clashes. Four workers were killed and 39 injured. 23 workers were arrested. Legal summonses have been issued for union leaders.

LO calls on the government to immediately release all arrested workers, to ensure the provision of medical treatment for the injured and to return to the bargaining table, with the representatives of workers and employers, to reach an agreement on a just minimum wage for the textile and garment industry. This requires the following actions:

- Release the 23 workers (list attached)
- Undertake a prompt and thorough investigation into violence used against protesters;
- Respect the right to freedom of association, in line with ILO Convention 87 which Cambodia has ratified;
- Introduce a legal framework consistent with Convention 87 and with the collective bargaining Convention 98; and,
- Institute a sound and inclusive process for determining the minimum wage.

As a member of the ILO and having ratified ILO Convention 87 in 1999, the government must also respect the right of unions and workers to exercise their right to freedom of association, including the right to strike, without threat or intimidation.

There is no question that the conduct of the authorities constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights, including freedom of association. We await your immediate action to restore industrial and social peace based on respect for fundamental human rights.

Sincerely,

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson', written over the typed name.

President

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation - LO