

14 October 2016

Cambodia – Physical attack against human rights defenders Chan Puthisak and Am Sam Ath

On 10 October 2016, human rights defenders Mr. **Chan Puthisak** and Mr. **Am Sam Ath** were beaten by Daun Penh district para-police officers while participating in a peaceful march to celebrate World Habitat Day in Phnom Penh.

[Chan Puthisak](#) is a land rights activist and human rights defender who works to combat corruption in Cambodia. He principally mobilises communities surrounding the Boeung Kak Lake in order to fight against an eviction order issued to them by the Government for the benefit of a private corporation in order to carry out development plans to make the area into a tourist destination. These development plans would include filling 90% of the lake, which constitutes the primary water source for local fishermen and farmer communities, and forcefully evicting local residents to make the area more attractive to domestic and international tourists. [Am Sam Ath](#) is the Monitoring Manager of **LICADHO** (The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights), a non-governmental organisation that monitors human rights violations and provides legal representation to victims of human rights abuses.

On 10 October 2016, human rights defenders Chan Puthisak and Am Sam Ath and villagers affected by the Boeung Kak Lake land disputes participated in the World Habitat Day march in Phnom Penh in protest of land grabbing and forced evictions. During the peaceful march, the Daun Penh district para-police forcibly confiscated a drum from one of protesters. When Chan Puthisak began recording the para-police confiscating the drum, they turned their attention to the human rights defender and physically attacked him. Am Sam Ath attempted to protect Chan Puthisak from further beating by asking the para-police to stop but instead the para-police also physically assaulted him. The human rights defenders suffered blows to their head, neck, back and chest. They received on-site first aid and follow up medical care from LICADHO's medical team of doctors. Both Chan Puthisak and Am Sam Ath have filed complaints with the Chey Chumneah commune police station.

Front Line Defenders condemns the physical attacks against human rights defenders Chan Puthisak and Am Sam Ath, as it believes the actions against them to be motivated by their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities in Cambodia.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cambodia to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assault against **Chan Puthisak** and **Am Sam Ath**, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defenders, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of **Chan Puthisak** and **Am Sam Ath**;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Cambodia** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.