

URGENT ACTION

CAMBODIAN HOUSING RIGHTS DEFENDER RELEASED

Two Cambodian housing rights defenders were tried and convicted on 22 August for “insult of a public official”. While Bov Sophea has been released, Tep Vanny remains in detention, serving a six-month sentence for charges related to a 2011 protest, and under investigation for separate charges linked to a 2013 protest.

Tep Vanny and **Bov Sophea**, housing rights defenders from the Boeung Kak community in Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s capital, were arrested in the evening of 15 August while conducting a peaceful vigil with a small group of people from their community against officials they allege to be corrupt. The peaceful gathering was part of the “Black Monday” advocacy campaign by human rights defenders protesting the detention of four staff from local human rights organization, ADHOC (Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association), and one former ADHOC staff member who is now the deputy secretary-general of the National Election Committee.

After being arrested, Tep Vanny and Bov Sophea were held at Daun Penh police station for two nights before being brought to Phnom Penh Municipal Court for questioning on 17 August. Later that day they were charged under Article 495 of the Criminal Code for “incitement to commit a felony” and trial proceedings were initiated immediately under Article 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code which allows for expedited prosecutions of accused where certain conditions are met.

The two activists were brought to trial on 22 August. According to witnesses, the proceedings lasted only 90 minutes. During the announcement of the verdict, the charges against them were changed to “insult of a public official” under Article 502 of the Criminal Code and the two women were each sentenced to six days’ imprisonment, the maximum allowed. Bov Sophea was released later that day. However Tep Vanny was returned to Prey Sar CC2 prison as she faced further investigation related to other charges in connection with a 2013 protest.

Tep Vanny and other housing rights activists from the former Boeung Kak lake area continue to be targeted by the authorities. In another resurrected case, on 19 September, Tep Vanny, Bo Chhorvy, Heng Mom and Kong Chantha were sentenced to six months’ imprisonment for insulting and obstructing public officials. This relates to a protest of almost five years ago in November 2011. Amnesty International will keep monitoring this case closely and will open a separate action if necessary.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the first update of UA 175/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA23/4683/2016/en/>

Further information on UA: 175/16 Index: ASA 23/4870/2016 Issue Date: 22 September 2016

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

