



Eleven Boeung Kak lake villagers and children beaten and detained

April 21, 2011

Bridges Across Borders Cambodia (BABC) and the Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF) strongly condemn the violence used today against peaceful Boeung Kak lake protesters and the arrest of 11 villagers – including two young children – in front of the Phnom Penh municipal cabinet.

At around 8:30AM, about 100 villagers from the Boeung Kak lake gathered in front of the Phnom Penh municipal cabinet to attempt once again to meet authorities to demand that the company stop filling the lake, which is causing flooding of people's homes, and for the authorities to stop evictions and enter into peaceful and transparent negotiations in order to reach an acceptable agreement with the affected residents.



As the peaceful protest unfolded, about 80 armed anti-riot police and about 30 military police officers came in and circled the villagers.

At 9:30 AM, a group of Phnom Penh municipal and Daun Penh district authorities, led by Phnom Penh Municipal Cabinet Deputy Chief Keut Chhay and Daun Penh district governor Sok Sambath, came out to ask for the villagers to return home, ignoring the villagers' requests for discussion. The villagers refused to leave and repeated their demands for their grievances to be heard.

Shortly after, the police brought in their van and arrested an initial group of six villagers, including two boys (aged 11 and 12). The remaining community members were beaten and shocked by anti-riot police using electric batons as they attempted to prevent the arrests.

Following the initial clash, the anti-riot police grabbed and arrested five more female villagers one by one and used more violence against the protesters to clear the area. By the end of the incident, at least three women had fallen unconscious due to electric shocks. One elderly woman, Nget Chhon was bleeding from a head injury; another woman, Tep Vanny had a broken finger; and several more were left bruised.

Over the last two months, villagers from Boeung Kak lake have staged a series of peaceful protests demanding that authorities listen to their problems and discuss the ongoing land grabbing by the Shukaku company, owned by CPP Senator Lao Meng Kim.

To this day, however, authorities have failed to resolve the increasingly tense situation surrounding the land grab. Instead, they are using delay tactics, empty promises and violence to disperse the villagers when they assemble to demand their rights.

BABC and HRTF call for the leading authority figures that ordered and oversaw this morning's violence against peaceful protesters to be suspended and investigated.

Additionally, BABC and HRTF strongly urges the government and the Phnom Penh authorities to cease its intimidation campaign and begin an honest dialogue with the Boeung Kak lake residents in order to resolve the ongoing land conflict. Beating the villagers and ignoring their voices won't make the problems go away.

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