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LICADHO

CAMBODIAN LEAGUE FOR THE PROMOTION
AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Violent Crackdown of Garment Workers' Strike in Kandal Media Statement

The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) deplores the violent dispersal by provincial and district police of a garment workers' strike on November 29, 2007 in Prek Khsev village, Rokar Khpous commune, Saang district, Kandal province.

More than 800 workers from the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers' Democratic Union (CCAWDU) went on a peaceful strike on the afternoon of November 28, 2007, after ongoing negotiations with the Fortune Garment and Woolen Knitting Factory Ltd. were unsuccessful. Workers' demands included that the factory fully abide by the Labour Law and respect the probation period for newly-employed workers.

This morning, around 9am, armed district and provincial police were sent to disperse the strike. Claiming the workers were causing traffic jams, the authorities forcefully cracked down on workers using tear gas. During the operation, at least one female worker, 20-year-old, was injured after being hit on her leg by a tear gas canister. The police also arrested and detained 4 workers who were later on during the day sent to the Kandal Provincial Police Commissioner.

"Injuring and arresting workers while they negotiating for their rights are plainly wrong", says LICADHO President Kek Galabru. "The government and relevant authorities must ensure and protect the right of all workers to peacefully strike as established in the Labour Law"

LICADHO condemns yet another dispersal of peaceful workers' strike and hope that the four workers detained will be swiftly released. Cambodia's Constitution and the Labour Law clearly state that all Cambodians have the right to peacefully assemble. However, it has been systematically violated by the government using unjustified grounds.

As Cambodia is currently advocating for the United States to allow preferential trade access for Cambodian-made garments, LICADHO is strongly disappointed by a lack of will power shown by the government to improve its record on workers' rights .

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