

Regional workshop held on ‘women human rights defenders working on land issues in South-East Asia’

PHNOMPENH (02 December 2014) – The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized a two-day regional workshop on ‘women human rights defenders working on land issues in South-East Asia’ on 1-2 December 2014 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The activity brought together grass-roots women human rights defenders from Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines and Cambodia, which provided an opportunity for them to discuss the challenges women human rights defenders face when working on issues related to land and natural resources; to share experiences, and to propose strategies to address these challenges and to build a safe and enabling environment for women human rights defenders. This regional event will contribute to research that OHCHR is conducting on how women human rights defenders are facing and addressing challenges in their work on rights related to land.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Wan-Hea Lee, OHCHR Representative in Cambodia mentioned ‘Whilst women human rights defenders are subject to the same risks and violations as their male colleagues, we note that they have additional vulnerabilities due to their gender; such as sexual abuse and harassment; domestic violence; conviction of ‘moral’ crimes; threats against their children; and gender-based attacks on their reputation. Gendered specific risks and threats require gender-sensitive protection and support’.

She also noted that, ‘It is with a sad sense of irony that one of the land rights activists who was scheduled to join us today from the Boeung Kak Lake are a is prevented from doing so because she is serving a one year prison sentence for taking part in a non-violent protest that occurred just two weeks ago.’

The workshop generated an opportunity for the participants to provide recommendations for building more secure and enabling environments for women human rights defenders to carry out their work, and to direct these recommendations directly at Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies and other organisations.

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