

## **Cambodia: UN expert welcomes releases and calls for respect for freedom of expression in upcoming elections**

GENEVA (15 March 2013) - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Surya P. Subedi, welcomed the release today of Mr Mam Sonando, and the imminent releases of Mr Kan Sovann and Mr Touch Ream following the decision of the Cambodian Court of Appeal on 14 March 2013.

“The Court of Appeal found that there was no evidence to support many of the charges, after first instance sentences of periods up to 20 years on charges including instigating insurrection,” Mr. Subedi said. “Some of the significant defects in the original trial, which were highlighted by some of my interlocutors with whom I met during my last mission to the Kingdom in December 2012, were remedied on appeal.”

“I regret however that some of the convictions remain in place, and new charges and convictions were introduced, with no opportunity for the accused to prepare their defence,” the human rights expert stressed.

“I have followed the case of Mam Sonando closely, and I visited him in prison last December to hear his own views on the process. The link between the prosecution of Mam Sonando and freedom of expression in Cambodia is of concern to me”, the Special Rapporteur said. “As I noted in my last report\* to the Human Rights Council, genuine freedom of expression is essential to any well-functioning democratic society.”

Noting that this is particularly true during election periods, such as the one Cambodia is now entering, the Special Rapporteur urged the Royal Government, civil society, the United Nations and donors to be vigilant in promoting and protecting the right to freedom of expression and opinion in the lead up to the National Assembly elections on 28 July 2012.

(\* ) Check the Special Rapporteur’s 2012 report to the Human Rights Council:  
[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session21/A-HRC-21-63-Add1\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session21/A-HRC-21-63-Add1_en.pdf)

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*Professor Surya P. Subedi was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council as the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cambodia in March 2009. As Special Rapporteur, he is independent from any government or organisation and serves in his individual capacity. He is currently Professor of International Law at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.*

UN Human Rights, country page – Cambodia:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KHIndex.aspx>

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