

Press Release

1 October 2009

Cambodia: UN expert highlights weaknesses in judiciary and restrictions on freedom of speech

GENEVA -- The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cambodia, Professor Surya P. Subedi, today reported to the Human Rights Council that improvements were needed in the overall human rights situation in the country, and expressed particular concern about the situation of freedom of speech.

“The rule of law is weak in the country. The judiciary is not as independent as it should be. Some of the core political rights such as the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly have been undermined,” the independent expert said while addressing the 12th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Prof. Subedi added that the defamation laws of Cambodia had gone beyond what is a permitted level of restriction on freedom of expression under the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Cambodia was a party. He went on to state that the spirit of the provisions guaranteeing freedom of speech in international human rights treaties is to treat any matters relating to restrictions on such freedom, including defamation issues, under civil law rather than criminal law unless such matters are of a grave nature and pose a threat to national security or public order.

The UN expert on Cambodia also expressed his concern that the issue of impunity had remained a painful matter which had not been addressed as thoroughly as it should be and land evictions had continued at the expense of, in particular, the people on the margins of society – the urban and rural poor as well as those belonging to the indigenous communities.

“I am encouraged by the fact that the Royal Government of Cambodia is willing to engage with me and other UN human rights agencies in a constructive manner. This is a major step in the right direction. The Council should give further impetus to this momentum for the betterment of the people of Cambodia”, said Prof. Subedi.

He went on to add that “the Council should encourage the Government to take concrete action to implement its obligations under various human rights treaties under a strict time-frame.”

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Learn more about the situation of human rights in Cambodia: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KHIndex.aspx>

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