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Forced evictions in Cambodia make thousands of peoples homeless: UN expert

The following statement on the latest in a series of forced evictions in Cambodia was issued today by the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik.

“More than 130 families were forcibly evicted during the night of 23 and 24 January 2009 from Dey Krahorm, in central Phnom Penh to make way for a private company to redevelop the site.

“The forced eviction was carried out in the middle of the night, without prior notice and the shelters belonging to this poor community were torn down and destroyed. This situation has grave consequences for all the victims, but particularly the women and children. Reports also state that prior to the eviction, the community suffered intimidation and community representatives and members were also subjected to criminal charges.

“It is regrettable that the ongoing negotiations with the residents were abandoned, casting aside a valuable opportunity to reach a just and lawful solution to this longstanding dispute. It is now of utmost importance that the rights of the residents to fair compensation for their lost homes and property and the provision of adequate alternative housing are fully respected.

“Unfortunately this is by no means an isolated case, and the increase in forced evictions throughout Cambodia is very alarming. Reports indicate that tens of thousands of poor people have been forcibly evicted and displaced, pushing them into homelessness and further destitution.

“In Cambodia, a consistent pattern of violation of rights has been observed in connection with forced evictions: systematic lack of due process and procedural protections; inadequate compensation; lack of effective remedies for communities facing eviction; excessive use of force; and harassment, intimidation and criminalization of NGOs and lawyers working on this issue.

“Forced evictions constitute a grave breach of human rights. They can be carried out only in exceptional circumstances and with the full respect of international standards. Given the disastrous humanitarian situation faced by the victims of forced evictions, I urge the Cambodian authorities to establish a national moratorium on evictions until their policies and actions in this regard have been brought into full conformity with international human rights obligations.”

ENDS

The former Special Rapporteur on adequate housing conducted a mission to Cambodia in 2005 and presented a mission report on his findings and recommendations (E/CN.4/2006/41/Add.3). Concerns on forced evictions in Cambodia have been shared through a large number of communications by the Special Rapporteur with the authorities. These communications remain unanswered to date. For more information on the work and reports of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, go to:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/index.htm>

For more information or interviews with the Special Rapporteur, please contact Bahram Ghazi at +41.22.917.91.77 or send a message to srhousing@ohchr.org