

Joint Press Statement
by NGOs and NGO Networks about the CTN broadcast reporting from
Kong Yu Village, O'Yadao District, Ratanakiri Province

We, representatives of NGOs and NGO Networks working in Cambodia on development, natural resource management and strengthening people's rights, have become aware of two news reports by Mr. Soy Sopheap in the regular CTN program "Cambodia Today" which were broadcast on 14th and 17th August, 2007.

We are concerned that these reports fall severely short of professional journalist standards. Unbiased reporting requires an open and honest review of the facts from all sides before drawing conclusions and making a public broadcast. The conclusion in the CTN report was reached without exhaustive investigations with all stakeholders, and it lacked in-depth legal analysis. We are particularly concerned about two issues:

- a) The false accusation of "incitement" made against NGOs involved in supporting this case
- b) The report gave unequal attention to the defendant in this case without giving an opportunity for the clients to discuss their reasons for bringing the suit, or for the NGOs which are working in Ratanakiri province to explain their involvement or legal issues.

Media reports like this not only compromise journalistic integrity, but also promote injustice, while undermining the rule of law and national and international legislation.

We, representatives of NGOs and NGO Networks, declare our position and vision that:

1. Our work is independent from politics and we are not affiliated with any political party.
2. Our aim is to support vulnerable communities to protect their rights under the Cambodian Constitution and 2001 Land Law.
3. Aiding vulnerable communities in realizing their rights is not incitement.
4. Each time the media characterizes our actions as incitement, the media is making it harder for marginalized communities to realize their rights.

We call for all stakeholders, including media groups, to promote the equitable implementation of the 2001 Land Law and Cambodian Constitution, in particular legislation protecting vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Peoples. We strongly believe that all stakeholders have the will and commitment to work together to effectively resolve land conflicts according to the rule of law.

Therefore, we recommend that all journalists, and CTN itself, make further investigations to verify the conclusions reached in the aforementioned reports. The Cambodian general public deserve accurate, truthful, and unbiased news reports. We hope CTN feels the same.

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