

សហជីពសេរីកម្មករនៃព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

FREE TRADE UNION OF WORKERS OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

អាសយដ្ឋាន : ផ្ទះលេខ ១៣B, ផ្លូវលេខ ២៤០, ទំពូឫសពេញ, រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ, ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

Address : House # 13B, Street 240, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.

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“យុត្តិធម៌សង្គមជាគ្រឹះនៃសន្តិភាព”

“Social justice is the foundation for peace”

March 17, 1999

CORRECTION OF RADIO FM105 REPORT

Radio FM105 recently reported, incorrectly, that Chea Vichea, President of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia, said that \$1,500 was adequate compensation for the families of the workers killed at the Parkway Hotel on March 12, 1999. Mr. Chea does not believe that \$1,500 is sufficient compensation for their deaths. In light of the appalling neglect that led, unnecessarily, to their deaths, Mr. Chea considers a minimum of \$5,000 to be adequate compensation for each worker killed.

Mr. Chea is appealing to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to enforce proper safety standards in all workplaces.

For more information please call Chea Vichea or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015.

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“Social justice the foundation for peace”

5 April 1999

CAMBODIA EMBROIDERY CASE GOES TO COURT

The approximately 75 workers fired from the Cambodia Embroidery Ltd. factory on March 24 successfully plead their case to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs this morning. The factory owner did not appear at the scheduled meeting. The Ministry of Labor has stated that the workers' grievances are legitimate and agreed to file a complaint in court.

However, the workers are concerned that their case will get lost in the judicial bureaucracy and that they will only receive compensation in several months, if ever. The Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia is appealing to the judiciary and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to find a quick solution to this problem. These workers were fired unjustly, without notice and without severance pay. They still have not received their wages from the month of March.

For more information please call Katja Hemmerich (in English) or Chim Vannama (in Khmer) at 023 217 015. Workers' representatives are also available for comment at the Free Trade Union headquarters.

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“Social justice the foundation for peace”

1 April 1999

STRIKE AT TRI NUNGA KOMARA FACTORY

Approximately 150 workers of the Tri Nunga Komara factory (on Tutkla Street, off National Road #4 about 5 km outside of Phnom Penh) have gone on strike to protest non-payment of wages and poor factory conditions. The factory owner, who started production last month, promised the workers \$35 for their first month, which was to be considered their trial period. At the end of the month workers were only paid \$25, which prompted the strike.

Negotiations have begun between the workers' representative, the factory owner and a Labor Ministry official. The factory owner and the Ministry of Labor official barred FTUWKC officials from joining the negotiations.

For more information phone Chea Vichea or Kim Chan Samnang (in Khmer) at 012 847 346.

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To: YUKO MAEDA

April 5, 1999

Bill Heidt
Economic and Commercial Officer
US Embassy
27 Street 240
Phnom Penh

Dear Mr. Heidt,

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about the current labor situation in Cambodia. I would like to use one case in particular, that of Cambodia Embroidery Ltd., as an example.

On March 17, 1999, seven section leaders at the factory were fired without warning and without proper severance pay. The factory owner claimed that they were bad workers, but all the workers at the factory believe that the real reason they were fired was because they were too concerned with the welfare of their fellow employees. As a result, the Cambodia Embroidery Ltd. workers held a strike on March 19. A representative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs managed to broker a satisfactory agreement on all issues except the reinstatement of the original seven section leaders. When the factory owner refused even to uphold the parts of the agreement that he had signed, a number of workers instigated another strike. These approximately 75 workers have now been fired. They have not received any severance or compensation package. The factory owner was only willing to pay their outstanding wages for the month of March if they signed a statement saying that they had willingly resigned and relinquished all rights to any severance pay. The workers refused. The Labor Ministry tried to intervene, however, the factory owner did not appear at a tripartite meeting set for April 5. Although the Ministry of Labor has said that the workers are in the right, the only action it has taken is to file a complaint in court. If the case ever resurfaces from within that bureaucracy, it is likely to be many months before the workers either return to their jobs or receive any compensation.

This is by no means an isolated case in Cambodia. Last week the Winner Knitting factory attempted to fire 200 workers without notice and severance pay. This comes less than a month after Winner Knitting fired 22 workers for initiating a strike aimed at raising their wage to the legal minimum wage of \$40. There have been similar incidents at YKhang and Blue Bird as well as a number of other factories. There is very limited recourse for workers who have been illegally dismissed in Cambodia. Even if the system works properly and the Labor Ministry and the courts successfully intervene on the workers' behalf, it is a long time that workers are forced to wait without pay.

I realize that the US embassy cannot intervene in each individual case. However, I also know that the US embassy has significant influence that has been helpful to the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Cambodian workers in the past. The Free Trade Union also hopes that this information will be remembered when the quotas for Cambodia's garment exports are reviewed. It is for these reasons that we wish to keep the American embassy informed of labor problems in Cambodia.

Thank-you once again for taking the time to meet with me.

Sincerely,

Chea Vichea
President
Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia

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“Social justice is the foundation for peace”

1 March 1999

PRESS RELEASE

The Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) will be holding its second biannual Congress on Sunday, March 7, 1999 from 7:20 am to 5:30 pm at the Chak Tumuk theatre, Street Prash Sisowath Boulevard, along the Tonlé Sap, Phnom Penh (near the Sofitel Cambodiana Hotel).

The Congress is being held in order to elect a new leadership for the coming two year term and to set the new mandate for the Union. The positions up for election include: President, Vice President and Secretary. Those positions are currently held by Ou Mary, Oum Navy, and Kim Chan Samnang respectively, who were elected at the Union's first biannual Congress held in February, 1997. The Union members will elect the new President by secret ballot and the new President will present the candidates for Vice President and Secretary to the Steering Committee.

Background on FTUWKC

The Free Trade Union of the Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia was created on December 10, 1996 by garment factory workers enduring extremely hard working conditions in Phnom Penh. Through the Union's leadership role in the labour unrest in late 1996 and early 1997, it helped obtain, among other things, a minimum salary of US\$40 per month and the negotiation of several signed agreements between workers and factory managers regarding sick and maternity leave as well as health care.

The FTUWKC has been growing steadily and now also has members from factories in the manufacturing sector. However, its members are still primarily from the garment industry. With more than 2,500 members, the FTUWKC is now one of the three main unions in Cambodia.

In 1998, the Union has continued to struggle for the full implementation of the 1997 Labour Law. It has organised training courses for workers representatives, starting with basic writing and reading lessons in Khmer, and has also tried to provide basic assistance to workers who have been fired illegally. The Union has also demanded, although unsuccessfully, an increase of the minimum wage to US\$60 and the reduction of the basic work week from 48 to 40 hours.

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PROGRAM OF THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE FREE TRADE UNION OF THE WORKERS OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA (MARCH 7, 1999)

- 6:00-6:30 Management committee arrives
- 6:30-6:40 Union members arrive
- 6:40-6:50 Union leadership arrives
- 6:50-7:00 National and international guests arrive
- 7:00-7:10 Sam Rainsy, adviser to the Union, arrives
- 7:10-7:15 Buddhist blessing
- 7:15-7:20 National anthem and moment of silence
- 7:20-7:25 Official opening of the Congress
- 7:25-8:00 Outgoing President Ou Mary reports on past activities of the Union
- 8:00-8:15 Speeches by the workers' representatives
- 8:15-10:15 Speeches by guests and advisers to the Union
- 10:15-10:25 Declaration of new candidates by outgoing president
- 10:25-10:45 Campaign speeches by the candidates
- 10:45-12:00 Election of new president
- 12:00-2:00 Lunch break
- 2:00-2:10 Election results announced
- 2:10-2:40 Speech by the new president
- 2:40-3:00 Declaration of new candidates for the Steering Committee
- 3:00-3:10 Congress adopts new candidates for the Steering Committee
- 3:10-5:30 Entertainment, orchestra and games
- 5:30-5:40 Closing of the Congress by the new Union President

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8 March 1999

FREE TRADE UNION OF WORKERS OF KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

Mr. Chea Vichea was elected as the new President of the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC) at the union's second biannual Congress on Sunday, March 7, 1999. Chea Vichea beat out six other candidates and will now take over from Ms. Ou Mary, one of the Union's founders and the FTUWKC's first president.

The Congress was held at the Chaktomuk theatre and attended by more than 1,200 workers and some 100 guests. Dr. Lao Mong Hay, Director of the Khmer Institute for Democracy; Mam Sonando, Director of Radio FM105; Sam Rainsy, member of the National Assembly; Norbert von Hoffman, Director of the Asian Regional Office of the Friederich Ebert Stiftung in Germany; and Ramon J. Jabar, President of the Federation of Free Workers in the Phillipines, all presented their messages of support to the Congress.

Voting was limited to Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia members who attended the Congress. Of the 3,061 Union members all over Cambodia, 1,238 took part in the election of President on Sunday. Chea Vichea won a landslide victory with 869 votes. His candidates for Vice President, General Secretary and Treasurer, respectively Ms. Oum Navy, Mr. Kim Chan Samnang and Mr. Chhun Bun Long, were all accepted by the Congress as were the new members of the Executive Committee. Both Kim Chan Samnang and Oum Navy held the same positions during the last two years. Former President Ou Mary was appointed FTUWKC honorary President.

Chea Vichea, aged 31, has been a leading figure within the labour movement since late 1996 and was one of the founders of FTUWKC in December 1996. Mr. Chea has worked to inform workers of their rights and raise media and public awareness about the difficult labour conditions in Cambodia. He has organised many protests and demonstrations and participated in negotiations between workers and factory owners during several disputes. At a demonstration at the Tack Fat factory in January 1997 Chea Vichea and the approximately 600 demonstrators were shot at and had firehoses turned on them. On March 30, 1997, while protesting against the judiciary's inaction with respect to Labour Law violations, Mr. Chea was seriously injured when grenades were thrown at the demonstrators outside the National Assembly. Both in April and June 1998, he was arrested by the police while supporting striking workers at their factories.

Mr. Chea has been working full time for the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia since January 1997. His previous employment was at the Ministry of Agriculture, a position he held since ending his Masters degree in Engineering in the former Soviet Union in July 1995.

For more information please contact Chea Vichea or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015.

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“Social Justice the foundation for peace”

7 April 1999

FREE TRADE UNION HOLDS WORKERS' EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia will hold a training session for its rank and file members on 11 April 1999 at the Hotel Dusit on Charles de Gaulle Blvd. near the New Market. Approximately 100 workers from 10 different factories are expected to attend the full day training (in Khmer). The training has been sponsored by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as part of their Workers' Education Program in Cambodia.

**Provisional Schedule for the
ILO Sponsored Training of FTUWKC Rank and File Members
11 April 1999**

7:30 – 8:00	Registration
8:00 – 8:15	Opening remarks by FTUWKC President Chea Vichea
8:15 – 8:45	Speech by ILO Regional Coordinator Nuon Rithy
8:45 – 9:15	Speech by representative of Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (<i>unconfirmed</i>)
9:15 – 10:15	Topic 1: The role and function of a trade union
10:15 – 10:30	Coffee break
10:30 – 11:15	The role and function of a trade union continued
11:15 – 12:00	Discussion and review
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch break
13:30 – 15:00	Topic 2: The Cambodian Labor Code (Chapter 11, Articles 266-299)
15:00 – 15:30	Group discussion
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 16:15	The Cambodian Labor Code continued
16:15 – 16:45	Discussion
16:45 – 17:00	Evaluation of training
17:00 – 17:10	Closing speech by FTUWKC President Chea Vichea

For more information please call Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015.

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13 April 1999

WORKERS FIRED BECAUSE OF RADIO INTERVIEW

Three workers from the San San garment factory (National Road #2 near the Tak Fat factory) were fired because they were interviewed on Radio FM105 regarding a recent strike at the factory. San San workers went on strike on Saturday, April 10, 1999 to protest late payment of wages. Mam Sonando of Radio FM105 interviewed Pam Toun, Kat Samon and Moeur Saom about the strike and broadcast the interview the same day. On Monday, the owner of San San informed the three workers that they were dismissed. Upon the advice of FTUWKC officials, workers' representatives at the San San factory have tried to negotiate and will organize a work stoppage on Monday, April 19 if the owner does not rehire the three workers.

For more information call Chim Vannama or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015 or 012 863 727.

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19 April 1999

STRIKE AT GRACE SUN GARMENT CO. CONTINUES TOMORROW

About 70 workers of the Grace Sun Garment Co. went on strike today to protest forced overtime and illegal payment practices instituted by the factory management today. The strike is expected to continue tomorrow morning. The Grace Sun Garment factory, which is part of the GRC Group, is located just west off National Road #2 (just before the pavement ends).

This morning the factory owner posted a notice saying that workers would only be paid by the piece and they would no longer be guaranteed the minimum wage of \$40 per month. Last month the management simply did not pay the workers their full salary. These actions violate a negotiated agreement between workers and factory director Sun Jian Jun, which ended the last strike over payment disputes on March 2, 1999.

For more information please call Chea Vichea at 023 217 015 or Katja Hemmerich at 012 863 727.

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31 March 1999

STRIKING WORKERS FIRED

On March 24, 1999 approximately 50 workers of Cambodia Embroidery Ltd. (on a side road across from Pochentong International Airport) were fired for leading a strike on March 19 to protest unlawful dismissals, salary reductions and unhygienic working conditions.

The agreement obtained by the striking workers and brokered by a Labor Ministry official on March 19 specifically prohibited any retaliation against workers who participated in the strike. However, since March 24 the factory owner has prevented approximately 50 of the workers who participated in the strike from returning to their jobs. They have been replaced with workers from a second factory under the same ownership. Since March 24 the fired workers have returned to wait outside the factory daily in the hope that the factory owner will either give them their jobs back or pay them an adequate severance package. He refuses to do either and has offered only to pay them their outstanding wages for the month of March on the condition that they give up any rights to compensation or severance pay.

The Ministry of Labor has agreed to meet with both parties on April 5. The factory owner has prohibited any of the workers involved to continue their protest outside the factory next week.

For more information call Chea Vichea or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015.

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FREE TRADE UNION OF WORKERS OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

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“យុត្តិធម៌សង្គមជាគ្រឹះនៃសន្តិភាព”

“Social justice the foundation for peace”

23 April 1999

WORKERS DEMOTED FOR LEADING STRIKE

Three leaders of a strike at Jin Chiang factory (on Street 528 behind the Plaza Hotel) yesterday were notified by the factory owner that they had been demoted and would receive a pay cut as of today. The owner did not state any specific reason for the demotion, however, workers believe it is because of their involvement in yesterday's strike.

Seng Navy, Un Sophanny and Chheth Bun Thorn organized a strike yesterday to protest poor treatment of workers at Jin Chiang and to force the factory owner to respect the Labor Code. In the agreement signed by the factory owner and workers representatives yesterday, the factory owner pledged not to retaliate against workers who took part in the strike. The three workers are filing a complaint with the Inspection Department of the Ministry of Labor.

For more information or to speak to the workers, please call Chim Vannama (in Khmer) at 023 217 015 or Katja Hemmerich (in English) at 012 863 727.

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“Social justice the foundation for peace”

21 April 1999

WORKERS LOCKED OUT

Approximately 60 of the garment workers at KK Group Cambodia Ltd. (on Tuol Sangkeo Street near Street #68) were locked out of the factory this morning by the owner, Ni Zhe Jiak. The workers believe they were locked out because the factory owner knew that they wanted to demand a raise from the \$30 to the legal minimum wage of \$40 per month.

The factory owner and six workers' representatives are currently in negotiations, which are being mediated by an official from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

For more information call Chea Vichea or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015 or 012 863 727.

FROM : Panasonic TAD/FAX

PHONE NO. :

Mar. 15 1999 06:24PM P1

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“Social justice is the foundation for peace”

March 15, 1999

APPEAL FOR BETTER SAFETY STANDARDS AT WORK

The Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia condemns the appalling lack of safety standards that lead to the death of five workers and injury of several more at the Parkway Hotel on March 12, 1999. The Union would like to call on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to enforce the minimum safety standards as guaranteed by the Labour Law so that similar accidents will not reoccur. Furthermore, although FTUWKC is pleased that some compensation is being paid to the families of the dead, the Union believes that the life of a Cambodian workers should be worth more than \$1,500.

For more information please call Chea Vichea or Katja Hemmerich at 023 217 015.

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3 May 1999

GARMENT WORKERS FEAR MASS DISMISSALS

Workers from Forum Garment Ltd. on Sokhok Street #164 in Sangkat Orussey have appealed to the Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia to help prevent what they expect will be mass dismissals at the factory. Several days ago, the factory management put up a notice stating that workers would have to undergo a test of their skills. Workers believe that this test will be used as an excuse to fire a large number of workers in retaliation for a recent strike. The factory owner has already put up notices looking for new employees.

FTUWKC President Chea Vichea supports the workers' claim that this would be an inappropriate pretext for dismissal. According to the Labor Code, employers are allowed to test the qualifications of their workers at the end of their training period, which cannot exceed two months. The majority of workers at Forum Garment have been working at the factory for approximately two years.

The Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia has informed the Ministry of Labor of the potential problem and has called on the government to help find a solution to avert these illegal dismissals.

For more information please call Katja Hemmerich (in English) at 012 863 727 or Chea Vichea at 012 852 205.