



## Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development

APWLD

NGO on the Roster in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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### **APWLD Demands Cambodian Authorities to Immediately End Intimidation of Hon. Mu Sochua, Cambodian Opposition Member of Parliament**

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) expresses deep concern over the violation of the rights of the legally elected women-members of the national parliament of Cambodia. APWLD is deeply concerned about the acts of intimidation directed toward Hon. Mu Sochua, elected member of the Cambodian Parliament from the lead opposition party.

In unjustly and incorrectly finding in favour of Prime Minister Hun Sen on 04 August, 2009 in his defamation suit against Hon. Mu Sochua, the Phnom Penh Court acted against the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of the press in Cambodia.

Hon. Mu Sochua is an outspoken human rights defender, an elected representative of the people who has dedicated her life to justice and the dignity of women. She has committed no crime. Her dignity and honor and her rights to serve her constituents must be restored through a justice system that is independent, neutral and competent.

The guilty verdict imposed on Hon. Mu Sochua, one of the victims of the Cambodian government's current use of the justice system to silence its critics, is a clear sign that space for democracy in Cambodia is rapidly shrinking and that the Cambodian government pays little attention to the opinion of the global community that has condemned actions taken by the top leaders of Cambodia.

Furthermore, the decision by the prime minister and members of parliament from his Cambodian People's Party to strip opposition members of parliament's parliamentary immunity and the blatant intimidation of Hon. Mu Sochua's attorney so that she was denied legal representation is an increasing distortion of the legal system by the Cambodian government and its officials, so that anyone who questions them can be sued, prosecuted and imprisoned.

APWLD condemns repressive tactics against progressive women struggling for democracy, human rights and freedom of expression. We deplore the tactics of personal attacks on prominent women-leaders of the region.

APWLD demands the restoration of immunity to Hon. Mu Sochua. All forms of intimidation and threats must stop against Hon. Mu Sochua and her supporters.

APWLD urges the Cambodian authorities to allow members of parliament from all parties to do their work in representing the interests of their constituents and speak out on issues of public importance without fear of arbitrary arrest, detention and intimidation.

APWLD reconfirms that parliamentary immunity exists so that members of parliament can have the confidence to discuss contentious issues of importance to the public without fear of retribution.

Hon. Mu Sochua has been a strong supporter of the people's, women's and children's rights. She intends to fight this injustice against women of Cambodia by the leader of the country. Her place is in the Parliament, not in jail!