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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

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CCHR calls for Puma to pull out of Bandith country

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) is appalled at the Svay Rieng Provincial Court’s decision to drop all charges against former Bavet City governor Chhouk Bandith, yesterday, 18 December 2012. Chhouk Bandith is the prime suspect in connection with the shooting of three female garment factory workers during a protest outside the Kaoway Sports Limited factory in Bavet City on 20 February 2012.

In its Media Comment dated 20 April 2012 ([‘No Justice in Bandith Country’](#)), CCHR criticized the negligible charges that were then being brought against Chhouk Bandith – which carry a maximum sentence of two years and a minimum of as little as six months for what appeared from the video evidence and the terrible injuries to be nothing less than attempted murder. It also highlighted the *“cloak of impunity that surrounds members of Cambodia’s political elite who occupy a sphere that is seemingly beyond the reach of Cambodia’s law enforcement and judicial systems”*.

The garment industry is Cambodia’s largest and most lucrative, and one of its main sources of foreign income. It employs more than 450,000 people, the vast majority of whom are women. Germany’s Puma – one of Cambodia’s biggest and most high profile brand buyers – buys the footwear made by the Kaoway Sports Limited factory ships the products to Europe, and Germany and Italy in particular. At the time, Puma criticized the violence, saying the day after the incident that *“Puma takes this incident very seriously and will take all measures to ensure that the safety of its supplier factory workers is paramount”*.

CCHR President Ou Virak comments:

“I am disgusted at the level of impunity that we are now seeing in Cambodia. This comes so soon after the impunity that surrounded the murder of Chut Wutty that there is no escaping the conclusion that the courts are not fit for purpose. Back in April, I said that the worst case scenario would be if this case was drawn out in the hope that it is forgotten and Chhouk Bandith never even faces trial. Well my prediction has come true, but we have not forgotten. Unfortunately, Puma have no choice now but to pull out of Cambodia completely. Otherwise consumers in Europe will not forgive them, and their brand will be forever stained with the blood of these poor garment workers.”

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Notes to Editor:

CCHR, founded in November 2002, is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights – primarily civil and political rights – throughout Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the global network for freedom of expression.

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal www.sithi.org is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms.