

# Global Unions, International Human Rights and Workers' Rights Organizations Call for End to Politically Motivated Prosecution of Tola Moeun

February 19, 2018



Public Services International  
Internationale des Services Publics  
Internationale de Services Publics  
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste  
Internationell Facklig Organisation for Offentliga Tjänster  
國際公務勞運



**Clean Clothes Campaign**



INTERFAITH CENTER ON CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY



BANGLADESH CENTER FOR WORKERS SOLIDARITY



大學師生監察無良企業行動  
Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour



**NESRI** NATIONAL ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE



student action on world poverty and the environment



Human Rights Now



中国工报 China Labour Bulletin



We, the undersigned global unions and international human rights and workers' rights organizations, call for the charges against Cambodian human rights defender Moeun Tola to be immediately dropped.

As reported on January 18, 2018, in the [Phnom Penh Post](#), prosecutors in Cambodia have sought criminal charges and an order for pre-trial detention against Tola and two other prominent civil society leaders, Pa Nguon Teang, an advocate for press freedom, and Venerable But Buntenh, an activist monk. Tola is the Executive Director of the Center for the Alliance of Labor and Human Rights ([CENTRAL](#)), and is a renowned supporter of labor rights in Cambodia.

On January 18, the Phnom Penh Court deputy prosecutor issued a preliminary charge for “breach of trust” against the three men, who were all members of the funeral committee for murdered activist Kem Ley. The deputy prosecutor also recommended that they be placed in pre-trial detention. None of the men were in the country at the time of the announcement; they risk imprisonment for an indefinite period if they return. If convicted, they face imprisonment for up to three years.

It is well known that Cambodia's courts are not independent, but rather are driven by the political interests of the ruling Cambodian People's Party. These charges constitute an attempt to silence and punish one of the country's leading independent voices for worker rights. As detailed in the [Phnom Penh Post](#), the pretext for the charges is a criminal complaint filed against Tola by Pich Sros, the leader of the obscure Cambodia Youth Party. Last year, Pich Sros filed the first complaint against the country's main opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, and its leader Kem Sokha, which led to Sokha's jailing and the party's dissolution by the courts.

The charges issued against Tola concern an unsubstantiated claim that he and the two other activists misappropriated funds raised for the funeral of Kem Ley, a well-known government critic who was assassinated in July 2016. Human Rights Watch has termed the charges “[politically motivated legal harassment](#)” and an example of the government targeting civil society activists. Moreover, multiple members of Kem Ley's own family have repeatedly stated that there is no basis for the allegations, and that Tola and the other two accused leaders never handled any of the funeral funds. Further, the complainant politician, Pich Sros, neither took part in the funeral nor has any connections to Kem Ley's family.

This case is emblematic of broader deterioration in the labor rights and human rights climate in Cambodia, where the government has closed down a number of independent media outlets, shut down the National Democratic Institute (NDI), dissolved the Cambodia National Rescue Party and arrested its leader on “treason” charges, and engaged in politically motivated prosecutions against a number of human rights defenders and unionists.

**We, the undersigned organizations, are strongly calling upon the Cambodian government to respect fundamental human rights and to immediately drop the charges against Tola and his two co-defendants.**

We stand in solidarity with [35 Cambodian human rights organizations expressing similar concerns and call for action](#).

Sincerely,

Building and Wood Worker's International  
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied  
Workers' Associations  
Public Services International  
International Domestic Workers Federation  
Human Rights Watch  
Asia Floor Wage Alliance  
Clean Clothes Campaign  
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility  
International Labor Rights Forum  
United Students Against Sweatshops  
Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity  
Maquila Solidarity Network  
National Guestworker Alliance  
Globalization Monitor  
Asian Transnational Corporations Monitoring Network  
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative  
Human Rights Now  
Jobs With Justice  
Coalition of Immokalee Workers  
People & Planet  
China Labour Bulletin  
Labour Education and Service Network  
Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour  
Korean House for International Solidarity  
Labour Action China  
Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangh  
Sedane Labour Resource Centre (LIPS)  
Tenaganita Womens' Force  
Action Labour Rights  
Labour Education Foundation  
MAP Foundation  
Trade Union Rights Centre Indonesia  
Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research  
The Cambodian Australian Federation  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights