



International Domestic
Workers Federation

Release Chea Chantha!

CAMBODIA

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RELEASE CHEA CHANTHA! RIGHTS FOR WORKERS' FREEDOM OF ASSOCIA- TION AND RIGHTS TO KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL PROTECTION

The IDWF is deeply concerned by the arrest and detention of Mr. Chea Chantha, a street vendor and a local leader of the Association of Independent Democratic of Informal Economy (IDEA) in Cambodia. The police in Bavet City, Svay Rieng Province, arrested Mr. Chea, accusing him of fraud under Articles 377 and 378 and acts of misconduct with public service under Article 610 of the Penal Code. The Svay Rieng Provincial Court has decided to charge Mr. Chea on July 19, 2024, and he has been detained since then.

Mr. Chea was arrested after he conducted a meeting with IDEA members who are informal workers, including street vendors, domestic workers, and tuk-tuk drivers. He told the workers about the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). He was promoting the government's policy, and IDEA has the support of the NSSF for such awareness-raising activity.

In Cambodia, 87% of the workforce are informal workers. Including domestic workers and other informal workers in the NSSF since 2023 is a significant step. This allows them to register with the NSSF and access some social protection benefits, with contributions from both workers and employers. However, including informal workers in the NSSF is still new, and most informal workers must be made aware of their rights and access to the NSSF. The NSSF is not just a system; it's a lifeline crucial to the well-being of the people and provides them with access to health care.

The IDWF affiliates in Cambodia, the ADW and IDEA, have been educating domestic workers on the NSSF and assisting them in registering. Due to their efforts, more than 700 domestic workers have registered with NSSF. However, Mr Chea's arrest and detention raise uncertainty among the organizations and cast doubts over the country's real intention to promote the social protection of informal workers.

The IDWF calls for the drop of the charge against Mr. Chea and his immediate release. It is crucial that the country maintains its policy of promoting NSSF registration and that this promotion does not result in retaliation by local government units or other government departments.