



**Human Rights
Institute**

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Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Cambodia

Oral Statement

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and Lawyers Rights Watch Canada welcome the Special Rapporteur's report. We echo concerns about judicialized lawfare and condemn the recent mass arrests of 94 individuals for peacefully expressing their views. The government's statements suggesting that some arrested should receive maximum sentences violate the presumption of innocence, fair trial rights, and judicial independence.

We condemn the targeting of civil society members, including family members of exiled human rights defenders, and the disturbing trend of coercing public apologies to stifle dissent. The recent arrest of journalist Mech Dara further illustrates the severe crackdown on freedom of expression and media freedom. Different voices and perspectives are the heart of a healthy democracy and of the rule of law.

The criminal justice system remains a challenge. Court monitoring shows declining access to justice, with 2 out of 5 recent cases heard without a defence lawyer. The lack of independent lawyers and limited access to justice perpetuate impunity and prevent the right to a remedy. We are particularly alarmed by reports of children being processed without legal representation.

We urge the Cambodian government to drop charges and release those arbitrarily detained, including Mech Dara, and call on the international community to support judicial reform so that legal professionals can operate freely and without persecution.

This statement was delivered by:

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