



Cambodia: Petition with 1 Million Signatures Presses Cambodian Lawmakers For Anti-corruption Law

May 16, 2008

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA: Cambodian social activists presented evidence of widespread support as they pressed lawmakers Friday (16 May) to take concrete steps to enact a long-awaited law to combat corruption in the impoverished Southeast Asian country.

Describing themselves as a coalition against corruption, they presented a petition to parliament after collecting more than 1 million thumbprints and signatures from people in support of their anti-graft drive.

Corruption "has been occurring almost everywhere and at every hour, and there is no sign that would lead us to believe it will slow down," said the petition of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations against Corruption, which comprises more than 40 nonprofit groups.

It said corruption is "getting worse gradually" while legislation needed to fight it has remained mired in draft form for 15 years.

"Without even starting to enact the law, corruption will surely not decrease, and corrupt individuals will continue quietly sucking away the nation's wealth," the petition said.

The coalition said it has collected 1,098,163 thumbprints and signatures since it began its nationwide campaign last November.

About 100 campaigners hauled the petitions to Parliament in 12 bundles. Security guards prevented them from bringing in all the forms, allowing only 10 activists in to deliver a three-page petition to a parliamentary office.

"We accepted the petition but not the copies of the thumbprints and signatures. Their quantity is huge, and we do not have space for storing them," said Khuon Sodary, chairwoman of the parliamentary committee for human rights and reception of complaints.

The activists claimed symbolic success in making their case on behalf of the public.

Prime Minister Hun Sen's government has been persistently slammed by foreign aid donors and other critics for failing to tackle corruption. In 2007, Cambodia was ranked 162nd among 179 countries in a survey by Berlin-based Transparency International, a non-governmental group tracking corruption worldwide. Cambodia was 151st in 2006.

(By SOPHENG CHEANG/ AP)

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Delivery of the 1 million signatures to the Cambodian Parliament

