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**Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development**  
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### **APWLD Condemns Acts of Intimidation Against Cambodian Opposition Member of Parliament: Threat to lift Member of Parliament Mu Sochua's immunity**

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) is deeply concerned about the acts of intimidation directed toward Hon. Mu Sochua, a National Assembly member of Cambodia. It is reported that she is under threat that her parliamentary immunity may be lifted. Hon. Mu Sochua of the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) has been in the center of intimidation tactics, verbal attacks, assault and defamation led by the Cambodian Prime Minister Mr. Hun Sen.



APWLD believes that arbitrarily threatening to suspend Hon. Mu Sochua's immunity by the Prime Minister, without due evidence of any crime having been committed by her, is a blatant act of intimidation against an opposition member of parliament.

Hon. Mu Sochua in late April 2009 announced her intention to sue the Prime Minister for defamation in connection with comments he made in a public speech in Kampot province on 04 April, 2009. Within 24 hours of this, a pro-government television station quoted a Prime Ministerial advisor as saying that the government would counter-sue Hon. Mu Sochua and that all Cambodian People's Party (CPP) members of parliament would support the lifting of her immunity.

On 17 November, 2008, a village of a hundred families was burnt down in the Kampot province and five villagers were severely injured. The land was being confiscated by the army to be given as concession to some companies that are linked to the Prime Minister. The villagers who had lived on the land for more than ten years were evicted and displaced. Hon. Mu Sochua in her capacity as Member of Parliament for the area asked the Prime Minister to stop the villagers from being evicted from their land but received no response from him. In retaliation on 04 April, 2009 the Prime Minister told the

villagers that if they wanted his assistance then they should not approach a member of parliament from the opposition. He referred to Hon. Mu Sochua as a *Satrey Cheung Khlang* which literally means “a strong legs woman” which is a very derogatory term particularly for a woman. This phrase generally means a gangster or prostitute.

On 30 June, 2008 during Hon. Mu Sochua’s electoral campaign she was attacked by a Deputy General-Director of the Governor House of Kampot Province and her shirt became unbuttoned. The attack came after Hon. Mu Sochua attempted to photograph a vehicle with military plate’s registration taking part in electoral campaign. None of the authorities present did anything to stop the assault. When the incident came to light, the Prime Minister on television and radio said that Hon. Mu Sochua had embraced a man and claimed that he unbuttoned her shirt.

In striving to achieve justice Hon. Mu Sochua is undertaking the following actions:

1. legal action against the Deputy General-Director on assault charges,
2. appealing to the National Assembly to demand the Prime Minister to present evidence to his claims and
3. filing a case with the International Parliamentary Union on the grounds of threat and defamation of an elected member of parliament by the Prime Minister.

**APWLD supports** Hon. Mu Sochua as she stands for the people of Cambodia amidst intimidation, verbal and physical attacks and threats to lift her immunity. She intends to fight this injustice against women of Cambodia by the leader of the country.

**APWLD urges** the Cambodian government to abide by due process of law in regards to the complaints filed by Hon. Mu Sochua as guaranteed in the Cambodian Constitution. The legal process should independent and impartial.

**APWLD urges** the Cambodian authorities to allow members of parliament from all parties to do their work in representing the interests of their constituents and speak out on issues of public importance without fear of arbitrary arrest, detention and intimidation. APWLD reconfirms that parliamentary immunity exists so that members of parliament can have the confidence to discuss contentious issues of importance to the public without fear of retribution.

**APWLD urges** the Cambodian National Assembly members to protect the role of their institution and its elected representatives. As such, they should refrain from lifting any member of parliament’s immunity unless there is compelling evidence of a crime having occurred.