

RESOLUTION IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE LABOR RIGHTS-SUPPORTED UNION OF KHMER EMPLOYEES OF NAGAWORLD (LRSU) IN CAMBODIA

WHEREAS in 2021, NagaWorld Casino terminated 1,329 workers– which included around 1,000 union leaders, members, and activists in a flagrant act of union busting;

WHEREAS LRSU attempted to collectively bargain to find a solution for all sides and for the reinstatement of approximately 300 of the unjustly terminated workers who did not accept a severance package and demanded reinstatement;

WHEREAS LRSU’s multiple approaches to a peaceful, legal solution were rebuffed by NagaWorld, which instead pushed ahead with its continued targeting of unionists;

WHEREAS NagaWorld claimed financial losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext for the terminations but is actually in a healthy financial position, and has been hiring new workers;

WHEREAS due to the lack of good faith negotiations, the LRSU began a peaceful strike on December 18, 2021, which was immediately declared illegal – even though the union had followed all required procedures;

WHEREAS during the week of December 31, 2021 through January 4, 2022, 29 workers were arrested, including LRSU president Chhim Sithar; nine workers in total were detained, with one released on bail; in early February 2022, more striking workers were arrested; in total, eleven workers were detained for a prolonged period of time – eight of whom were detained for over two months; the workers were not released until mid-March; the prolonged detentions are a disgraceful and grave violation of basic human, labor, and union rights;

WHEREAS the Cambodian authorities weaponized the Covid-19 pandemic against Cambodian workers throughout 2022 for utilizing their legal right to strike, physically abused and forcibly removed them from the demonstration site, and bussed to a Covid-19 quarantine location and other locations on the far outskirts of town;

WHEREAS Cambodian authorities re-arrested Sithar on November 26, 2022 as she returned to Cambodia after participating in the World Congress of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), in Melbourne, Australia, for violating bail conditions on international travel that neither she nor her lawyer had been informed about;

WHEREAS On May 25, 2023, a Phnom Penh court found Sithar and the eight LRSU leaders who were previously detained, guilty of “incitement to commit a felony or disturb social security” under criminal code articles 494 and 495, and sentenced Sithar to two years in prison and the other union members to between one to one and a half years (sentences suspended or judicial supervision);

WHEREAS the LRSU leaders were prosecuted solely for exercising their basic rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly; and Cambodian authorities have commonly used the bogus charge of “incitement to commit a felony” against union members undertaking a strike action as part of broader government efforts to crack down on dissent;

WHEREAS LRSU leaders and workers have expressed an urgent need for financial support for their families after over eighteen months without wages as the strike continues;

WHEREAS LRSU is one of Cambodia's strongest, most vocal and visible, independent and democratic labor unions, is women-led, and is a pillar in the country's labor movement;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) stands in solidarity with the LRSU in their demand to the Cambodian government for the immediate and unconditional release of Sithar from prison and the overturning of the convictions of every LRSU leader, their struggle to reinstate all of the unjustly terminated workers who demand reinstatement with back pay and compensation, for union recognition of LRSU and to halt union busting tactics by NagaWorld, to call for good faith negotiations with NagaWorld, and to stop the use of force against strikers and protesters;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APALA joins the global trade union movement to continue raising funds to support striking workers, protesters, and their families for basic needs such as rent, food, and fuel;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APALA works with its Congressional representatives and federal government allies to demand that the U.S. Embassy in Cambodia support the LRSU in its ongoing struggle, persuade the Cambodian government to immediately and unconditionally release Sithar from prison and overturn the convictions of every LRSU leader, peacefully resolve the dispute, and call on NagaWorld to negotiate with LRSU in good faith;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APALA works with its union and grassroots allies in the U.S. to pressure U.S.-based executives of NagaWorld to meet the demands of the LRSU;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that APALA promote the LRSU struggle on its social media platforms including via hashtags, posts, and/or videos to raise awareness, raise funds for LRSU, and recruit broad support.

Submitted by:

APALA International Solidarity Committee (Atley Chock)