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Cambodian Center for Human Rights



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Report reveals difficulties of Khmer Krom in accessing citizenship rights in Cambodia

[Alliance for Conflict Transformation](#) ("ACT"), the [Cambodian Center for Human Rights](#) ("CCHR"), and [Khmer Kampuchea Krom for Human Rights and Development Association](#) ("KKKHRDA") publish today, **Friday 27 January 2017**, a report entitled, "*Citizenship Rights for Khmer Krom in Cambodia*" (the "Report"). The report is available for download in [English](#) and [Khmer](#).

While the Royal Government of Cambodia ("RGC") has publicly declared members of the Khmer Kampuchea Krom ("Khmer Krom") minority group to be Cambodian citizens, in practice domestic law fails to provide a clear legal or administrative avenue by which Khmer Krom can realize this right. The strict requirements for individuals to be granted Cambodian identity cards that are set out in the Nationality Law and related regulations mean that, in reality, many Khmer Krom are unable to access identity documents and enjoy the rights that citizenship should provide. This research aims to provide empirical data about the legal status of Khmer Krom in Cambodia, including data relating to the experiences of, and difficulties faced by, Khmer Krom as a result of their lack of citizenship status, with reference to the obstacles to applying for identity cards.

The Report is based on the findings of research involving 264 Khmer Krom individuals in 7 of Cambodia's provinces and Phnom Penh, conducted from October to November 2016. The findings revealed that Khmer Krom without identity cards continue to face difficulties living in Cambodia, including discrimination, lack of housing, and lack of recognition from the authorities. Of the survey respondents, 60.60% cited discrimination as one of the main difficulties or challenges they face in Cambodia.

Troublingly, the report reveals that the majority of Khmer Krom who were surveyed lack awareness of their rights under Cambodian law and of the procedures for acquiring Cambodian identity cards, with a striking 91.60% of respondents unaware of the citizenship rights for Khmer Krom under the Cambodian Constitution and Nationality Law. The research revealed that 59.50% of respondents had never applied for a Cambodian identity card, with the most frequent explanations for this being that they did not receive information on how to do so (25.95% of responses) and that they did not know if anyone could assist them (16.03%). The research findings suggest that the lack of clarity and legal certainty created by the contrast between the RGC's statements that Khmer Krom are Khmer citizens, and the absence of a clear administrative or legal avenue to allow them to access these citizenship rights in practice, is acting as a barrier to Khmer Krom realizing these rights.

The Report concludes by offering recommendations to relevant stakeholders, including the Royal Government of Cambodia, *inter alia* concerning the need for clarity in the legal framework governing

the means by which Khmer Krom can apply for identification documents. It is the hope of ACT, CCHR and KKKHRDA that the Report and its recommendations will serve to improve the situation for Khmer Krom in Cambodia, and provide further evidence of the need for greater action to ensure Khmer Krom are able to access their citizenship rights in practice.

ACT's Executive Director Srey Sotheavy comments:

"To improve the situation, build confidence and trust, and reduce conflict, the government should ensure Khmer Krom people can access identity cards and proper education, and promote knowledge about their rights and the social services available to them. Relevant government departments, NGOs and CSOs need to continue their work to reform the law to take account of the needs of the Khmer Krom people, with transparent and proper mechanisms to solve conflicts and improve the relationship between local authorities and the Khmer Krom people, so that issues can be dealt with successfully and peacefully on the ground."

CCHR's Advocacy Director Duch Piseth comments:

"Despite the Cambodian authorities' assertions that Khmer Krom are to be considered Khmer citizens, this report reveals that Khmer Krom still struggle to regularize their legal status in Cambodia, and continue to face serious problems, such as discrimination and lack of housing, in their daily lives. The government's words need to be matched by actions, to provide a clear, legally secure path for Khmer Krom to obtain identity documents, and ensure that they can enjoy the rights of citizenship on an equal basis."

KKKHRDA's Program Director Son Chum Chuon comments:

"Khmer Krom are indigenous people born of Khmer descent. After they move to Cambodia, they should be treated as Khmer citizens in accordance with Cambodian law and relevant norms, and enjoy the same rights without discrimination."

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