

## Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Date: March 17, 2010  
Speaker: Isabela Piacentini

**Joint Oral Statement to the 13th Session of the Human Rights Council by Lawyers Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), a non-government organization with special consultative status and the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), a non-government organization with general consultative status.**

### Item 6

**Cambodia:** Comments on the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of Cambodia

Lawyers Rights Watch Canada and the Asian Legal Resource Centre are pleased that Cambodia's Constitution enshrines human rights, but we are concerned with the lack of independent courts and by reports of political interference and corruption in Cambodia's courts. Also of concern are reports that advocates representing villagers in land-rights cases have been targeted with threats, harassment and defamation charges in order to silence them.

We agree with recommendations that Cambodia carry out legal and judicial reforms to address the ongoing problem of impunity by guaranteeing the independence and impartiality of judges, prosecutors and court personnel in keeping with international standards. We agree with the recommendations that Cambodia ensure full protection to human rights defenders and lawyers working on land rights issues so that they may carry out their duties without improper interference. We urge full observance, by Cambodia, of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

We further urge that reforms include enacting provisions that guarantees the independence of lawyers and the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia. We urge Cambodia to take steps to ensure that lawyers are not subject to inappropriate influence or corruption in the exercise of their professional duties, and that the Bar Association is protected from interference in matters of bar admission or discipline. We urge Cambodia to implement the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers so as to ensure that the Law on the Bar is interpreted in accordance with international standards. Finally, Lawyers Rights Watch Canada and the Asian Legal Resource Centre urge Cambodia to accept all requests for visits by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.