



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Cambodia

Cambodia – KHM40135 – Treatment of
Buddhists in Cambodia – Demonstrations
in Cambodia – Entry/exit procedures for
Cambodians

4 May 2012

1. How are Buddhists treated in Cambodia?

According to the US Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom for Cambodia for 2010, an estimated 93% of the Cambodian population are Theravada Buddhist.¹ The report notes that Theravada Buddhism is “widespread and strong in all provinces” and is the state religion of Cambodia. Buddhist holidays are celebrated as national holidays, and the government supports the Buddhist religion by providing religious training to Buddhist monks, and through “modest” support for a Buddhist research institute.

The US Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom for Cambodia for 2010 report states that the Cambodian constitution prohibits religious discrimination and the government does not tolerate abuses of religious freedom by government or non-government actors.²

2. Please provide general details of major demonstrations in Cambodia the last four years.

Reports of protests were located concerning demonstrations in which protesters were assaulted by police and/or arrested. According to the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association, in 2011 there were 256 protests and 183 in 2010 throughout Cambodia.³ About 50 of these involved violent confrontations between the security forces and protesters.⁴ These protests primarily related to issues such as land/house evictions⁵ and labour disputes.⁶ In their annual report on Cambodia for 2011, *Human Rights Watch* noted that the ruling party “used the judiciary, new laws, and threats of arrest or legal action to restrict free speech, jail government critics, disperse workers and farmers peacefully protesting, and silence opposition party members.”⁷ *Amnesty International* reported that a group of 30 protesters (24 women and six children) were arrested during a January 2012

¹ US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December) - Cambodia*, 13 September, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168350.htm Accessed Thu, 15 Sep 2011

² US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December) - Cambodia*, 13 September, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168350.htm Accessed Thu, 15 Sep 2011

³ Abbott R. & Coughlan J. 2012, ‘Failing justice, protests and violence’, *Asia Times*, 5 April http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/ND05Ae01.html Accessed 4 May 2012

⁴ Abbott R. & Coughlan J. 2012, ‘Failing justice, protests and violence’, *Asia Times*, 5 April http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/ND05Ae01.html Accessed 4 May 2012

⁵ ‘Cambodian land protest blocked by police; 5 hurt’ 2012, *The Associated Press*, Bloomberg Business Week, 2 May <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-05/D9UGGM300.htm> Accessed 4 May 2012

⁶ Brady, B. 2010, ‘Cambodia garment workers protest low pay’, *LA Times*, 19 September <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/19/world/la-fg-cambodia-garment-strike-20100919> Accessed 4 May 2012

⁷ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Cambodia*, n.d., <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/cambodia> Accessed 4 May 2012

protest over land evictions. No further information could be located concerning the final outcome of these arrests or whether those involved were still being held.

Reports of protests that have taken place in Cambodia include:

- January 2012 – multiple protests concerning land evictions normally occurring at the site of the eviction.⁸ Reports that protesters were assaulted, arrested, and detained.
- September 2011 – A large legal protest involving “tens of thousands” demonstrators took place concerning the wages of garment workers. No arrests were reported although some union leaders lost their jobs.⁹
- September 2011 – *Amnesty USA* reported that an activist was “beaten unconscious by police with batons and a brick after he called for other residents to join hands to stop the destruction of more houses.”¹⁰
- August 2010 – “Unidentified plainclothes officials” forced around 50 land protesters into a bus chartered by the government. The bus was driven from Phnom Penh to a location 20km from the protesters’ village. The villagers were forced to walk to remaining distance.¹¹
- March 2010 – Police stopped a land rights protest march by approximately 100 villagers. Eight were detained and threatened with arrest before being released.¹²
- June 2009 – During a protest over land seizures, a protestor was shot and wounded by police. As of April 2011 no known actions had been taken in relation to the incident in relation to the actions of the police.¹³

No reports were located on major demonstrations relating to Buddhism that have occurred in Cambodia in the last four years. The most recent major demonstration involving Buddhists in Cambodia was a 2007 incident in which a small group (generally estimated to be 50) of monks protested the treatment of Buddhist monks in Vietnam. A minor scuffle took place between the protestors and a smaller group of six monks. According to reports, the motives of the smaller group were unclear and it was not known what caused the confrontation.¹⁴

3. Please provide any information on border control in Cambodia and whether persons of interest to the authorities are able to exit or enter the country.

⁸ Guest D. 2012, „Cambodia: Release peaceful protesters detained over forced eviction’, *Amnesty International*, 12 January <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/cambodia-release-peaceful-protesters-detained-over-forced-eviction-2012-01-12> Accessed 4 May 2012

⁹ Human Rights Watch 2011, *World Report 2011: Cambodia*, n.d., <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/cambodia> Accessed 4 May 2012

¹⁰ „Amnesty International Urges Cambodia to Halt Boeung Kak Lake Forced Evictions in Phnom Penh’ 2011, *Amnesty USA*, 19 September <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/amnesty-international-urges-cambodia-to-halt-boeung-kak-lake-forced-evictions-in-phnom-penh> Accessed 4 May 2012

¹¹ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Cambodia*, 8 April, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154381.htm Accessed Mon, 11 Apr 2011

¹² US Department of State 2011, *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Cambodia*, 8 April, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154381.htm Accessed Mon, 11 Apr 2011

¹³ US Department of State 2011, *2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Cambodia*, 8 April, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154381.htm Accessed Mon, 11 Apr 2011

¹⁴ „Buddhist monks brawl outside temple during protest in Vietnam’ 2007, *Daily Mail*, 20 April <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-449704/Buddhist-monks-brawl-outside-temple-protest-Vietnam.html> Accessed 4 May 2012

No information was located specifically about border control in relation to persons of interest leaving or entering Cambodia. No information was located as to whether Cambodian officials conduct criminal checks of Cambodian citizens departing from or arriving in Cambodia.

General information concerning procedures for incoming and outgoing passengers can be found on the website for the General Department of Customs and Excise in Cambodia.¹⁵ These procedures are general in nature and relate to all transiting passengers whether they are Cambodian or foreign citizens. No information is provided in these procedures to indicate whether criminal screenings

¹⁵ „Clearance for Passengers’ n.d., General Department of Customs and Excise in Cambodia <http://www.customs.gov.kh/clearanceforpassengers.html> Accessed 4 May 2012

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