



ECONOMY

Shoe Factory Threatens Jobs Over Forming Union, Workers Say

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Khut Sokun | Wed Apr 7, 2021 6:11 pm



CATU president Yang Sophorn said workers at a Kampong Chhnang shoe factory were threatened when they attempted to form a union (Hy Chhay/VOD)

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A Kampong Chhnang shoe factory is threatening workers' jobs as they try to unionize, the Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions and its local representative said.

Sleh Farita, a factory worker who is leading the attempt to unionize, said management at shoe factory Tripos International had repeatedly told her and about 10 others to give up their efforts or face termination.

"They said that if we still refused to [stop], they will ask the accounting department to take our cards away, they would pay us immediately and they would stop us from working.

Recently, I was threatened again," Farita said.

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Article 5 of the Trade Union Law allows for employees and employers to form a union or employer association to represent members, though pro-worker unions have taken issue with the article for restricting the activities that they can perform.

The article states the unions must be for the “exclusive purpose of study, research, training, promotion of interests, and protection of the rights and moral and material interests.”

Farita’s mother, who sells food to workers outside the factory, had also been intimidated, she said.

“For me personally, I will not give up, I still represent the union to protect the rights and interests of workers, because this factory oppresses workers very much,” the factory worker said.

Farita said the factory was Chinese owned and employed about 2,000 workers. The company is listed with the Commerce Ministry but not as a member of the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia.

The Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU) said workers had notified the factory about establishing a union three times, but had been rejected and their jobs threatened.

In a statement dated Monday, it called on the Labor Ministry and buyers such as Clarks to intervene and allow the union’s establishment.

CATU president Yang Sophorn said on Tuesday that some workers had resigned amid the threats.

“The actions of the company are completely illegal and are prohibited by law. And the company continues to do so, and no relevant institution, especially the [provincial] department of labor or the Ministry of Labor ... has called the company to advise or tell or punish the company. It has not done so yet.”

“We think this is a point where our workers are being treated unfairly. They just formed a union to protect their rights, freedoms and interests, but were prevented and persecuted,” Sophorn said.

Kampong Chhnang labor department director Pov Sitha acknowledged there had been problems at the factory in the past, but said officials had intervened and resolved the issues.

If problems arise again, workers can file another complaint to the department for the officials to intervene, he said.

“We have agreed not to discriminate against the freedom to form a union. That is a right under the law. Neither union nor company can violate the law. When the law is violated, it must be punished according to the law. We have already resolved that case,” Sitha said.

Neither Labor Ministry spokesman Heng Sour nor a Tripos representative could be reached

for comment.



➤ GARMENT FACTORY, UNION, WORKERS

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