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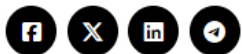
# Cita seeks help as teachers face ‘incitement’ charges

## NATIONAL

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Reporter : Long Kimmarita

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Ministry of Justice spokesperson Chin Malin said Cita had the right to submit the request, but that no institution would be allowed to interfere with the Kingdom's independent judicial affairs. **Heng Chivoan**

The Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (Cita) has submitted a letter to Education International (EI), a global federation of teacher unions, requesting that it intervene to help four teachers who were arrested for allegedly engaging in "politically motivated" activities.

But a Ministry of Justice official said other than providing legal counsel, no institution would be able to help them.

In the letter dated June 10, Cita identified the four teachers as Kampong Chhnang province native Keo Thay, Chhum Chan from Prey Veng, Peat Mab

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from Siem Reap and Sun Thun from Kampong Thom.

According to Cita's letter, Thay was arrested at his home on March 26. Police did not present a warrant and they confiscated three phones from his family, the letter said. He was charged with conducting online classes at a time when schools had been ordered to temporarily close to prevent Covid-19 infections.

Cita said Chan was arrested on April 15. He was allegedly tricked into going to a district police station for questioning, where he was promptly arrested and charged with "incitement and attempting to topple the government".

Mab was allegedly arrested without explanation on May 27 at his mother's house. He was later charged with "plotting", "inciting serious chaos to social security", and "inciting military personnel to disobedience".

Thun was arrested on June 1 under similar circumstances as Mab and allegedly taken from his home without an explanation. He was later charged with the same crimes as Mab.

"The association [Cita] is of the view that these arrests are politically motivated because the authorities were following [Prime Minister] Hun Sen's orders to suppress people's freedom of expression during the Covid-19 pandemic," the letter read.

Cita president Ouk Chhayavy told The Post on Thursday that the letter was sent to persuade the EI to open a dialogue with the government to negotiate the teachers' release.

"The EI has a large influence in the world. If the EI helps [the association], then those who defend human rights must coordinate to release them. The EI accepted our request and provided encouragement, but we don't yet know the next steps to be taken."

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport spokesperson Ros Soveacha declined to comment on Thursday.

Ministry of Justice spokesperson Chin Malin said Cita had the right to submit the request, but that no institution would be allowed to interfere with the Kingdom's independent judicial affairs.

He said Cita should have tried to provide legal aid to the teachers instead. More importantly, Malin said, Cita needs to urge its members to remain professional and avoid political activities which could be deemed illegal.

"Cita carries out activities [to serve politics] and is more political in nature because most of its members are founders and leaders of a hidden political party.

"They have to abide by the laws in place. If they break the law, they will be held accountable without exception," he said.

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## Post Media Co Ltd

The Elements Condominium, Level 7  
Hun Sen Boulevard  
Phum Tuol Roka III  
Sangkat Chak Angre Krom, Khan Meanchey  
12353 Phnom Penh  
Cambodia

Tel: Celcard: 078 555 166/ 078 555 133

Smart: 086 822 999 / 086 277 999

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