

## Garment workers block Phnom Penh road and call for bonuses

21 January 2021 9:24 PM |

Khuon Narim



Workers from the Y&W garment factory block street 217 in Dangkao district to demand unpaid bonuses on Thursday. Khuon Narim



Thousands of garment workers blocked a major service road in Phnom Penh on Wednesday and Thursday to demand unpaid entitlements, as worker advocates accused employers of using short term contracts to control staff, avoid bonuses and silence dissent.

One man detained on Wednesday following a brief scuffle with police was questioned for using violence against police and released, said Chor Kimsor, the Dangkao district deputy governor, who on Thursday met the workers from the Y&W Garment factory on street 217.

Mr Kimsor called for the workers to remain peaceful as a government working group sought to resolve the dispute at the Chinese-owned factory, in which workers are call for seniority and other bonus they say they are owed after working for years on short-term contracts

"The resolution will take time and they are working on the issue," Mr Kimsor told the workers.

After years of employers exploiting short term contracts, which leave workers less likely to report abuses, join unions or decline overtime for fear of losing their job, the Labour Arbitration Council in 2019 ruled that workers must receive open-ended contracts and associated benefits after a maximum of two years.

Many of the workers at Y&W say they have been employed at the factory on short-term contracts for years, and are therefore entitled to the security of an open-ended contract and to be paid seniority indemnity, maternity leave and other bonuses.

"We demand seniority payments; we have livelihoods to uphold," said Heng Him, 35, claiming that factory bosses had promised to begin paying the bonus from 2020, which would be about \$100 for the year, while demanding an additional 5% compensation.

"They violate our rights; we use our energy to work and then receive nothing," said another striking worker, who declined to give her name in fear of losing her job, adding that she had to make \$100 in loan repayments to a bank each month.

The Chinese factory owners could not be reached for comment.

Labour Ministry spokesman Heng Sour said that the ministry was working on the dispute and that "factories can use short-term contracts but not exceeding four years."

Also on Thursday, the Labour Ministry announced the resumption of seniority payments for workers on open-ended contracts, following a delay brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than two thirds of workers said bosses were illegally using short-term contracts in a 2019 survey of 464 factories by Better Factories Cambodia.

"Short term contracts are very effective in [in limiting] rights and the freedom to join unions and associations," said Kong Athit, president of the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union (CCAWDU), adding that 70% of factories across the country exploited workers that way.

"We worry about the violation of rights and workers losing a lot of entitlements," he said, adding that workers on short term contracts rarely dared to join protests.

"Everything is a risk for workers on short-term contracts, said Khun Tharo, a program coordinator at labour rights group Central. "There is no job security and it effects the approach to rights."

823 views

### LATEST NEWS

Cambodia's Ambitious Funan Techo



Y&W Workers' Protest Persist Despite



**Canal Project Sparks Concerns Near and Far**

23 Mar 2024



**Compensation, R.G Footwear Declares Bankruptcy After Fire**

22 Mar 2024



**Major Natural Resource Crackdown in Pursat Continues To Seize Land, Nab People, Dismantle Huts**

22 Mar 2024



**Cambodian Authorities Dispute Thai Government's Account of Scam Compound Rescue in O'Smach**

21 Mar 2024



**Laid Off Giant Ibis Bus Drivers Ask Why Resolution Is Taking So Long, Fight Continues For Job, Compensation**

21 Mar 2024



**MOST VIEWED**

- 1** An Overview of New Ministry Leaders and Their Family...
- 2** Verra Opens Investigation into Wildlife Alliance's...
- 3** IFC Requests Review of Watchdog's Decision to...
- 4** Burning Homes in the Name of Conservation: NGO...
- 5** Cambodia Launches Lavish and Chaotic SEA Games, as...

**Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association**

+ (855) 23 88 23 11

editor@cambojanews.com

#19, St. 388, Sangkat Tuol Svay Prey I, Khan Boeng Keng Kang, Phnom Penh.

**About**

About Us

Contact Us

Jobs

គ្រួសារ ព័ត៌មាន

**Topics**

National

Journalists

Politics

Social

Environment

Human Rights

Business

Opinion

© 2019 - 2023 CamboJA. All rights reserved.

