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Union leaders land in court for strike, 'starving' workers

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Four Cambodian Federation of Labour Union officials were sent to the Kampong Speu provincial court amid allegations that they led factory workers to stage illegal demonstrations. Photo supplied

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Kampong Speu provincial authorities sent Cambodian Federation of Labour Union (CFLU) officials to the provincial court amid allegations that they led workers to stage illegal demonstrations in front of the Park Handbag Factory in Trapeang Kong commune of Samrong Tong district from January 8-16.

Provincial police chief Sam Samuon said on Sunday that technical authorities sent four men to the provincial court on January 17.

The suspects were identified as Din Sam Ath, 41, the CFLU president and adviser to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, and three CFLU officials Roeun Sarin, 36; You Sophat, 36, and Khouth Chan Chhaya, 29.

Kampong Speu provincial governor Vei Samnang told The Post on Tuesday that though it is within the rights of workers to demand their benefits, the four suspects were said to have threatened and roughed up workers who wanted to enter the factory to work.

They also shouted insulting words toward the company and responding authorities and persuaded workers to not report for duty, said Samnang.

He said the suspects ordered their group to prevent vehicles, which delivered workers' lunches, from entering the factory.

"It is the workers' right to demand better working conditions from the factory. But we arrested them because they committed a crime when they seized the food of the workers and threw them away.

"They were starving the workers. How can they do that? As authorities, we have to take action," he said.

Investigating Judge Men Vannak declined to comment and referred questions instead to the court spokesman. However, the spokesman, Sorn Vircak, declined to comment over the court's proceedings.

Kampong Speu provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training director Chek Borin said he could not comment on the case as it had already been left in the hands of the court.

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training spokesman Heng Sour said that generally, it will monitor such cases and provide legal services if the concerned party requests for assistance.

"In this case, [you] should ask the prosecutor and law enforcement officials who made the arrest. We will also be monitoring it," Sour said.

Yim Serey Vathanak, the senior officer of labour rights group Solidarity Centre, said he had not been apprised of the case but agreed that the authorities had the right to arrest the suspects if the allegations against them were true.



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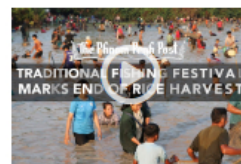
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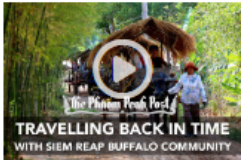
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