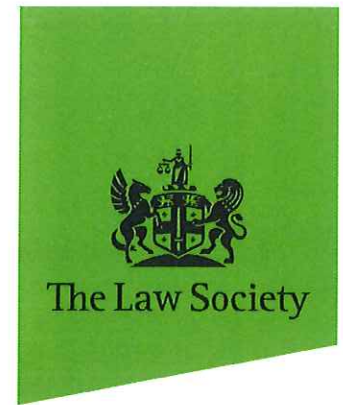


From the President



His Excellency Mr. Hun Sen
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
41 Russian Federation Blvd
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia

By email: leewood_phu@nida.gov.kh

25 March 2015

Your Excellency

Mr Alejandro Gonzalez-Davidson

The Law Society is the professional body representing more than 145,000 solicitors in England and Wales. Its concerns include upholding the independence of the legal profession, the rule of law and human rights throughout the world.

The Law Society is concerned for the human and environmental rights activist Mr Alejandro Gonzalez-Davidson who has been arrested and deported following his activities with the advocacy group Mother Nature, of which he is co-founder. Mr Gonzalez-Davidson was arrested on 23 February 2015 at around 1.15pm local time and was later deported on a plane destined for Bangkok, Thailand.

Mr Gonzalez-Davidson's visa expired on February 2015 and the immigration authorities refused to renew his visa, allegedly following orders from Interior Minister Sar Kheng. It has been reported that shortly before Mr Gonzalez-Davidson's deportation the Prime Minister Hun Sen commented that *"Regarding Alex [Gonzalez-Davidson], let the Ministry of Interior take measures. It's not just foreigners, it's also Khmers that will be sentenced and other NGOs shouldn't express much."*¹ Futher, Sok Phal, the director-general of immigration, said that the decision not to renew Mr Gonzalez-Davidson's visa was made after local authorities in Koh Kong lodged a complaint about his activities campaigning against the proposed dam project in the Areng Valley². His charity, Mother Nature, has recently been campaigning against the Cambodian authorities' plans to build a hydroelectric dam in the Areng Valley in the Cardamom Mountains in the southwest of the country.

This concerns us because it appears that Mr Gonzalez-Davidson may have been arrested and deported as a result of his efforts to protect human rights in Cambodia, impeding his work as a human rights campaigner and threatening his right to freedom of expression.

In 1992, Cambodia acceded to the ICCPR, which contains legal obligations on State Parties to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms. We would draw your attention to Article 19 of the ICCPR which provides that:

¹ <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/activist-alex-arrested>

² <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/areng-mapped-in-hope-ecotourism-can-save-valley-from-dam-78006/>

Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

In addition the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998 states that:

Article 1

"everyone has the right, individually or collectively, to promote the protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels"

Article 12

2. "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration"

On behalf of the Law Society, I respectfully ask that, unless there are valid legal charges underlying his deportation, Mr Gondalez-Davidson should be permitted to return to Cambodia and continue his human and environmental rights activities. If such valid legal charges are present, then Mr Gondalez-Davidson should be given the opportunity to face these charges before a judge and given the procedural protections he is entitled to. This would ensure respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments signed or ratified by the Kingdom of Cambodia and provide protection for human rights defenders in Cambodia, allowing them to carry out their work freely and without hindrances.

Yours sincerely



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President

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