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March 18, 2020

Ms. Chea Sangthida, Director
Mr. Lu Chu-Chang, Director
Think Biotech (Cambodia) Co. Ltd.
Phum 1, Boeng Kak 1
Tuol Kouk
Phnom Penh, 12151
Cambodia

Subject: Alleged mistreatment by Think Biotech employees of environmental activists

Dear Ms. Chea Sangthida and Mr. Lu Chu-Chang,

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, which is an international nongovernmental organization that monitors violations of human rights by state and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world, including Cambodia.

In the interests of thorough and objective reporting, we are seeking your comment about an incident allegedly involving actions by your company and its personnel. Due to publication timelines, we hope you can respond to us by March 20, 2020.

We understand that on March 12, Ouch Leng, director of the Cambodian Human Rights Task Force (CHRTF), accompanied by Khem Soky and Srey Thei, two members of the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN), and Ouch Leng's associate, Man Mat, were investigating allegations of illegal logging within a land concession that is reportedly owned by Think Biotech, which borders the protected area of the Prey Lang forest in Kratie province.

Cambodia's Minister of Environment, Say Sam Al, [raised](#) concerns in December that Think Biotech and Angkor Plywood Company were involved in the logging of valuable trees in the Prey Lang forest, discussed in reports from environmental groups and international donors. The four activists collected information of alleged illegal logging by Think Biotech during their investigation, all of which was confiscated by the authorities upon their arrest.

We understand that at approximately 9 a.m. on March 13, at least a half dozen security guards representing themselves as working for Think Biotech physically detained the four activists near the company's second largest sawmill compound within the company's concession, south of the Stung Treng border. These guards then questioned them, allegedly physically detained them on the compound, and did not allow them to contact anyone. The guards then transported them to another compound owned by the company that is locally known as "Dombouk Sor" in Sambor

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district, Kratie province, where they were held overnight. We understand that the security guards allegedly physically assaulted Man Mat at the company compound, causing him to have incurred a head injury that bled profusely.

We understand that at approximately 3 p.m. on March 14, the police arrived at the compound and transferred the four environmental activists to the Sambor district police station in Kratie province.

On March 16, the prosecutor of the Kratie provincial court ordered the release of the four activists, upon having questioned them for several hours. The court decided to continue its investigations into alleged crimes by the activists and to look into the guards' alleged physical assault of Man Mat while he was detained by them.

In relation to this incident we have the following questions for which we would appreciate your response as well as any other comments you might have:

1. Kindly provide an account of the incident.
2. Why did Think Biotech security guards detain these four persons? Who at Think Biotech authorized this action? Please describe any company policies or procedures that the security guards were acting under to detain or question these individuals.
3. Under what legal or other authority did the company's security guards detain these individuals? What company policies or procedures provided for turning individuals over to the police?
4. Has the company investigated the alleged beating of Man Mat while in company custody? What are the policies and procedures regarding the use of force by company security?
5. What further steps is the company taking in regard to this incident?

Your response will be reflected in our public reporting. Given our publications timelines, we kindly request that you reply within 48 hours, by March 20 close of business. Please provide your responses to my colleague at XXX.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Brad Adams
Asia Executive Director
Human Rights Watch