

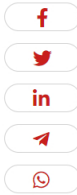


# Laid off Siem Reap airport staff protest to demand full payment

23 July 2021 9:31 PM | Khoun Naim | Ngay Nai



Former Siem Reap airport staff protested in front of the airport to demand compensation on July 23. CTWF



Former employees of the Siem Reap International Airport protested on Friday calling for what they say is payment owed to 130 workers who were laid off last year.

Roughly 80 workers gathered and held placards in front of the airport, urging the government and company to speed up settlement after negotiations with the provincial labor department fell apart early this year.

Tholna Mony, 42, a former carpark agent who worked for the airport for more than a decade, told CamboJA that the protesters wanted to push authorities and the company to expedite a resolution.

"I have no job since I have been laid off and now face severe financial difficulties. I urge the authorities to find appropriate solutions especially helping in expediting their work," she said. She noted that workers who were laid off have not received any update since February, either from the provincial labor department or the company

"We all want to go back to work when the company fully restores its operation. We cannot find another job because most of us are aging now," she said

Some 130 workers had their jobs suspended in April, 2020. In December, workers rejected an offer to accept termination and receive 80 percent of seniority payments owed to them, calling for Cambodia Airports to pay out the entitlements in full.

The employer, in which France's VINCI Airports holds the controlling share, said they could not afford full payment given the impact of the pandemic. Airport passengers decreased 84 percent in 2020, according to VINCI.

"Facing this grim situation, the company had to unfortunately let some of its employees go," said Khek Norinda, a spokesman for Cambodia Airports. He added that the situation has worsened in the first 6 months of this year.

"After we managed to save some jobs by internalizing jobs previously outsourced, we had to part ways with 130 employees," last December 2020, Norinda said.

In this unprecedented crisis situation, we expect parties to lay grounds for constructive dialogues and to demonstrate mutual understanding," he added.

Pheng Chheangly, chief of inspection and conflict resolution at the Siem Reap provincial labor department, said that after the last meeting in January, all relevant parties agreed to have one or more further meetings, and the remaining problems would be resolved by the Labor Ministry's National Strike Prevention Commission.

"Currently, there is no updated information from the coordinator of this discussion because the meeting cannot be set, probably because of the rise of COVID-19," he said.

Chheangly said that there is only one unsolved issue remaining between the company and its employees and that involves how much workers will be paid.

"The company cannot provide the full compensation to its employees in termination of employment contracts due to the financial crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

He said that since November 2020 and January 2021, the Labor Ministry and relevant authorities have held negotiations five times.

Ron Ravann, president of the Siem Reap Airport Cambodia Tourism Industry Worker Trade Union, said that the company has not done enough to negotiate with the workers and that pandemic or not the law is clear about what workers are owed.

"The calculation [of seniority payment] doesn't comply with the labor law," he said.

"We demanded them to calculate seniority before suspending their jobs, not only basic salary upon being fired, and we demanded six months as compensation, but the company gave only three months," Ravann said.

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