January 11, 2021

The Clooney Foundation for Justice announced today that its partner the American Bar Association Center for Human Rights will monitor the upcoming trial of Theary Seng in Cambodia as part of CFJ’s TrialWatch initiative. TrialWatch monitors criminal proceedings around the world and works with legal experts to assess their fairness according to international and regional human rights standards.

Theary Seng, a Cambodian-American human rights lawyer who has been a persistent critic of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, was charged—along with more than 40 others—with conspiracy to commit treason and ‘incitement,’ charges that carry a penalty of up to 12 years’ imprisonment. To date authorities have provided no factual information about the allegations against her but it appears that the charges may be based on allegations that Ms. Seng is affiliated with opposition leader Sam Rainsy, one of her co-accused, as well as the now-banned Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). Her counsel has however said she has “no affiliation” with the CNRP.

This trial comes amidst a renewed crack down on anyone believed to be associated with the CNRP. Cambodia is also increasingly using its vague ‘incitement’ law to prosecute critics.

Trial monitoring, which entails sending a neutral observer into court to observe criminal proceedings, permits an impartial assessment of whether a trial meets international fair-trial standards. The Clooney Foundation for Justice reiterates its view that Cambodia’s incitement law must be repealed or reformed. CFJ also calls on Cambodia to ensure that any trial of Ms. Seng respects her right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression.