

ANGKOR SITE RELOCATION PROGRAM CRITICIZED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization, has published a report criticizing the displacement of 10,000 families living near the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Cambodia. While Phnom Penh claims that the aim is to preserve the integrity of Angkor, a jewel of Cambodian tourism, experts have expressed doubts.

The report states that the Cambodian authorities are unlawfully evicting thousands of families from their homes and land in the name of protecting the thousand-year-old site. The report, titled "Nobody Wants to Leave Their Home," highlights **the plight of 40,000 Cambodians facing forced eviction near Angkor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The relocation program has resulted in uprooting, threats, relocation to a site without electricity and drinking water, and loss of jobs and income.

The threat to the archaeological site in Cambodia, which houses the famous Angkor Wat temple, is not a new or hidden phenomenon. Phnom Penh authorities have implemented a "relocation program" in response to expanding the local population, excessive water use, and increased waste production that endanger the site's integrity and World Heritage status. This poses a significant problem, as the Khmer Empire's jewel is a pivotal asset for tourism development.

Last year, the Cambodian government began a "voluntary relocation program," which accelerated towards the end of 2022. The program aims at 10,000 families, urging them to leave their current site and move to a former rice cultivation land a little further away.

Between May and June 2023, Amnesty International investigated the conditions of these "relocations". They interviewed residents and visited two resettlement sites in Angkor Park on nine occasions. **The human rights NGO concluded that all those interviewed felt manipulated, coerced, or forced to leave**. Amnesty International denounced Phnom Penh's broken promise, as they were promised this relocation would be voluntary.

Date: 2023-11-20

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/cambodias-relocation-program-criticized-by-ngo-news13972>