Asian American Organizations Denounce Deportations of over 30 Cambodian Americans at Beginning of 2020

Norcross, GA, January 14, 2020 — Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Asian Prisoner Support Committee, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, Southeast Asian Freedom Network, and Vietnamese Anti-Deportation Network strongly denounce the deportation of more than 30 Cambodian Americans on Monday, January 13, 2020. The flight included a number of individuals that these organizations have worked with to terminate their removal orders. The majority of these individuals entered the United States as refugees, and these deportations are occurring during the 45th anniversary of Southeast Asian Americans’ resettlement in this country.

Since 2017, there has been a 279% increase in deportations of Cambodian Americans, and deportations of Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans are the highest they have ever been in over a decade. Over 17,000 Southeast Asian Americans have been ordered removed, and over 1,900 have been deported since 1998. US House Reps. Chuy Garcia, Pramila Jayapal, Karen Bass, and Ayanna Pressley recently introduced the New Way Forward Act, a bill that restores due process protections for immigrants with a criminal record and may have enabled some, if not all, of these community members to remain with their families in the United States.

Nathanial Tan, co-director of Asian Prisoner Support Committee, said, “Deportations are a devastating reality for Cambodian American refugees. Since our arrival to the United States, Cambodian people have fallen subject to poverty, incarceration, ICE detention and deportation. Despite these deportations, we must continue to support and fight for folks. Deportations are not the end of the battle. We must continue to fight deportations and continuously find ways to reunite refugee families.”

Quyen Dinh, executive director of Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, stated, “Our families and communities escaped to the United States because of political and ethnic persecution after the fallout of the Vietnam War and conflict in the surrounding region. It is unconscionable for our country to deport Southeast Asian Americans to countries their families fled and that many cannot even remember. We cannot continue to give second chances to only US citizens and must apply that same standard to all residents in this country. The United States cannot continue to tear our families apart by denying due process protections for refugees and immigrants. Congress must urgently move to advance bills like the New Way Forward Act to give our communities tools to fight their deportations.”

Montha Chum, national co-director of the Southeast Asian Freedom Network, said, “The deportations of Cambodians and other Southeast Asian Americans devastate our communities. These refugees were pushed into the criminal justice system and served their time in prisons and detention centers. Deportation is cruel and triple punishment simply because they’re not citizens. The Southeast Asian Freedom Network (SEAFN) remains committed to working with our members and organizing our communities to keep families together and find a new way forward for immigrants and refugees.”

Cat Bao Le, national organizer of the Vietnamese Anti-Deportation Network, said, “The idea of who belongs in this country and who doesn’t; who is given first class citizenship and who is not; and who should be incarcerated and who should be free has been part of America’s racialization throughout history. It attempts to create a group of people who are deserving of forgiveness and those that are not. The criminalization of Southeast Asian
refugees falls into this long history and reinforces the unjust systems in place. It’s easier for the U.S. government to see us as disposable and deportable, devoid of the history and circumstances under which we came to this country.”

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About Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.

Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org.
