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'Stubborn' furniture firm vexes villagers

Wed, 8 January 2014 [Phak Seangly](#)

Twenty families from Ratanakiri's Kon Mom district are seeking intervention after a private company allegedly encroached on 10 hectares of their land.

The unnamed company produces furniture from wood acquired from embattled Vietnamese concessionaire Hoang Anh Andong Meas, and over the course of the last two months has built fences surrounding more than 10 hectares of farm and public land, said village representative You Sam Noeurn.

"After surrounding it, the company built five small homes on it for about 100 workers and banned villagers and animals from entering," she said. "I brought wood to build a house there, but the company chased me out."

According to Sam Noeurn, villagers have been farming the land since 1993.

The company is owned by Sam Sarun, who could not be reached for comment, but local authorities confirmed that the land appeared to have been illegally grabbed.

"It's not acceptable that the company surrounded the land, but I am not sure if the company got permission from another authority," said Sre Angkrang commune police chief Keo Sophak.

Commune chief Chhem Sokhoem said authorities had tried to intervene after hearing of the case, but the company owner has simply ignored them.

"A solution could not be found, because the company owner is stubborn and would not meet with us," he said, adding that he had forwarded the case to higher-level officials.

After a month of silence, however, villagers this week turned to local rights group Adhoc, filing a complaint with them on Monday.

Provincial coordinator Chhay Thy said the group would investigate the case today.

Contact author: [Phak Seangly](#)

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