



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

NATION RELIGION KING

MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS

STATEMENT

Cambodia Strongly Rejects the Claims of the Thai Minister of Culture Regarding Cambodian Cultural Heritage Sites

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia strongly rejects the arguments made by the Thai Minister of Culture, H.E. Mrs. Sabeeda Thaised, on 25 October 2026, as published in the *Khaosod* newspaper, claiming that: (1) K'nar temple and Ta Krabey temple are located within Thai territory; (2) The Thai side has registered these temples on its national heritage list under its domestic laws, taking administrative measures to manage and conserve them accordingly; and (3) on this basis, the Thai side refuses to return the artifacts unilaterally removed from the aforementioned temple areas, under the pretext that collecting these artifacts was intended for study, maintenance, and conservation.

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts categorically dismisses the above claims as lacking any basis in international law, and wishes to clarify and emphasize the following points:

First: K'nar temple and Ta Krabey temple, and several other temples situated along the Cambodia-Thailand border, currently under unlawful control by the Thai military, were constructed by Khmer ancestors and are located within the territory of the Kingdom of Cambodia. This is fully compliant with the 1:200,000 scale map resulting from the demarcation works of the Commissions of Delimitation of the Boundary between Indo-China and Siam, produced in the spirit of the 1907 Franco-Siamese Convention. The Thai side has consistently recognized and adhered to this map, as evidenced in the 2003 Terms of Reference (TOR 2003) and various agreed-upon technical records. The validity of this map was affirmed and recognized by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1962 and 2013, where Thailand's challenges to its effectiveness were rejected. Following the border conflict initiated by the Thai side against Cambodia in 2025, the Thai side declared non-recognition of this map's validity.

Second: Even when examining the Series L7017 map, unilaterally drawn by the Thai military, devoid of legal value under international law, contrary to the spirit of the two ICJ judgments, and consistently objected to by Cambodia, these temples are depicted as lying within Cambodian territory, providing undeniable evidence.

Third: Administrative measures taken by Thailand, such as listing these temples on its national heritage roster and claiming management and conservation rights without Cambodia's consent, constitute deliberate attempts to create a *fait accompli* on the ground. Under international law, such actions do not constitute lawful administration, do not create inviolable ownership rights, and cannot prevail over Cambodia's lawful sovereignty and Territorial Title, which is grounded in the principle of border stability (*uti possidetis juris*), historical boundary maps, treaties, and prior agreements.

Fourth: The unilateral collection and removal of artifacts from these temple areas, unlawfully occupied by the Thai military and without Cambodia's consent, violates existing international legal norms. These include state obligations prohibiting the seizure or removal of cultural property from the sovereign territory of another state or from unlawfully occupied zones under the 1954 Hague Convention, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, and various UNESCO instruments concerning the conservation of cultural property and monument sites. Furthermore, these illegal actions are viewed as intentional attempts to alter the border environment, destroy technical evidence, and modify the original topography of the border zone. This directly contradicts Article 5 of the 2000 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU 2000), which mandates that only the Joint Boundary Commission (JBC) framework possesses the authority to conduct activities related to boundary survey and demarcation on the ground.

Fifth: These actions provoke unnecessary tension along the border, undermining prior agreements and commitments made by both nations to rebuild and restore mutual trust, most notably the Joint Statement of 27 December 2025 and subsequent agreements. In this regard, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Kingdom of Cambodia deeply regrets that the Ministry of Culture of Thailand continues to engage in actions that damage trust, good-neighborly relations, and respect for sovereignty, which are vital for restoring normalized relations between both nations for the ultimate benefit of our peoples.

The Ministry firmly calls upon Thailand to immediately cease all unauthorized activities at Cambodian cultural heritage sites, ensure the return of archaeological objects removed from K'nar Temple, and fully respect Cambodia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and cultural heritage. Cambodia urges Thailand to resume the work of the Joint Boundary Commission (JBC) without delay and to resolve all outstanding boundary issues peacefully, through dialogue and in accordance with international law and applicable bilateral agreements. Cambodia remains committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and the protection of cultural heritage for future generations. 

Phnom Penh, 27 October 2026



