

To: H.E Dr. Hang Peou, Director-General of APSARA National Authority

23rd August 2022

Re: Concerns regarding the mistreatment of and interference with wild non-human primates at Angkor Wat

Dear Director-General,

We are writing to you from animal protection groups Action for Primates, Lady Freethinker and Stop Monkey Abuse Asia, to raise our concerns regarding the activities of video operators at Angkor Wat. Those activities are having a substantial negative impact on the welfare and well-being of the resident macaques and are increasing the chance of serious injuries to the public.

The people in question are deliberately interfering with and harassing the long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) and northern pig-tailed macaques (*Macaca leonina*) at Angkor Wat in order to create videos for online 'entertainment' on social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. This exploitation of the macaques is highly disturbing and, unfortunately, has been getting worse over recent weeks.

In order to get footage of what they believe will trend on social media, the people are creating havoc within the troops by instigating aggression amongst the individuals. Monkeys are also being fed, poked with metal rods, and harassed by being relentlessly followed with cameras and people shouting. One extreme example involves the removing of infants from nursing females. Video footage shows mothers being held by video operators and their babies forcibly removed and placed into backpacks. This is extremely stressful and distressing for the mothers and their nursing and vulnerable infants. After posting the footage on channels such as YouTube, the operators are requesting donations from viewers. Not only is the situation incredibly inhumane, the deliberate staging of a conflict situation and asking for donations to intervene is fraudulent.

"Baby Rainbow needs your help to comeback home and reunion her family."
[<https://donorbox.org/helprainbowtocomebackhome>]

Here are some examples of videos posted online:

- <https://youtu.be/G3Lxh1UrVRQ>
- <https://youtu.be/NU5P0NLzonc>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9_n2vaLzjU
- <https://fb.watch/eZJqQQSwZO/>
- <https://fb.watch/eZiZwXw2hS/>
- <https://fb.watch/eXY3qbw1x/>

The video operators also release monkeys who have been raised as 'pets' in human households, into the existing wild population at Angkor Wat. These monkeys, who are not part of the established troops, are at risk of serious injury and death. It is obvious that the operators are only interested in creating 'drama' for filming rather than looking out for the welfare of the captive individuals.

Article 49 of Cambodia Forestry Law states that it is:

It is strictly prohibited to hunt, harm or harass all wildlife:

- 1- Using all types of dangerous means;

- 2- 2- Hunting during the prohibited season; and
- 3- 3- Hunting in protected zones and special public areas.

In addition to the harassment of the monkeys and the deliberate interference and disruption to their social groups, there are serious concerns for the safety of the public. Although wild non-human primates are typically fearful of human beings, the artificial feeding of the macaques at Angkor Wat has habituated the macaques to human beings so that they are less fearful than normal. As a result, the macaques may attack people to try to get food. The harassment of the macaques by the video operators serves to create even more potential for aggression so that the public will be at increased risk of attack and injury. Compounding all this is the potential for disease transmission from the macaques to people. The macaques may be carrying organisms that normally are latent and do not cause disease in them. When highly stressed, however, such as is the case at Angkor Wat, there can be shedding of the organisms. Because there is close contact with people, this puts people at risk.

For the sake of the macaques and the safety of the public, we urge APSARA to intervene to stop this inhumane, unlawful exploitation of the macaques.

Please let us know if you need further information. We look forward to hearing from you. Please contact us on skite@actionforprimates.org or info@actionforprimates.org

Yours Sincerely

Ms Sarah Kite (Co-founder, Action for Primates)

Ms Nina Jackel (Founder and President, Lady Freethinker)

Ms Shaz Daisy Torrance (Stop Monkey Abuse Asia)