



Brussels, 23 November 2016

Dear High Representative,

We, members of the European Parliament, would like to express our increasing concern regarding the recent significant deterioration of the human rights situation in Cambodia since the visit of the delegation of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament in April 2016 and the previous letter of concerned members of the European Parliament in May 2016.

It is highly worrisome that since September 2016 four senior opposition politicians were convicted on politically motivated charges, in violation of their constitutional right to parliamentary immunity. Opposition senator Hong Sok Hour was sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment on spurious forgery and incitement charges and MP Um Sam An was sentenced to 2,5 years' in prison on similar incitement charges. Both cases are a direct backlash against political dissent expressed on social media. In addition, Cambodia's National Rescue Party (CNRP) leader Sam Rainsy was convicted of defamation on 8 November and is currently residing in exile due to being formally banned from entering his country, while CNRP deputy leader Kem Sokha remains under de facto house arrest. We also recall that fourteen CNRP officials and supporters remain imprisoned serving sentences of between 7 and 14 years for "insurrection" charges. These authoritarian actions take place within an environment where politically compromised courts and repressive new legislation place increasingly severe restrictions on individuals and civil society.

Additionally, the ongoing politically motivated detention of four senior human rights advocates from the prominent Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) as well as a member of the National Election Committee is a clear example of the shrinking civil society space in the country. We also recall that the Black Monday campaign, a citizens' movement protesting the detention of the aforementioned human rights defenders, has resulted in 36 arbitrary arrests and renewed judicial persecution of prominent civil activists such as Boeung Kak Lake and human rights defender Tep Vanny. Further, we regret the killing of prominent political analyst Dr Kem Ley and the fact that there still has not been any independent or investigation.

These developments threaten democratic participation and free expression in the run-up to the local and national elections in Cambodia in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The international community should take a strong, public stance supporting Cambodian civil society and human rights defenders and facilitate the possibility for all democratic political forces and individuals to participate in the elections. We call on the EU to closely monitor developments ahead of the elections and reiterate our support for the systematic introduction of human rights conditionality clauses implementing the recommendations of the European Parliament resolution in June 2016. We call on the EEAS to ensure any agreements signed by the EU make the amount of funding to Cambodia dependent on immediate clear and measurable improvements of the human rights situation in the country.

Recalling the resolution of the European Parliament approved in June 2016 and the united stance of 39 United Member States, including all 28 European Union Member States, at the UNHRC, the underneath signatories kindly urge you to use all diplomatic measures at your disposal – including public statements - to call for the Cambodian authorities to release those detained on bail, to drop all charges facing human rights defenders; and to take all necessary measures to ensure that human rights defenders are able to perform their vital function in society without fear of reprisal.

Yours sincerely,

Petras Auštrevičius

Hans van Baalen

Bronis Ropé

Ramon Tremosa i Balcells

Tunne Kelam

Jasenko Selimović

Lars Adaktusson

Viktor Uspaskich

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica

Javier Nart

Anna Fotyga

Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea

Barbara Lochbihler

Nathalie Griesbeck

Ana Gomes

Monica Macovei

Hilde Vautmans

Frédérique Ries

Carolina Punset

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt

Mark Demesmaeker

María Teresa Giménez Barbat

Bas Belder

Liliana Rodrigues

Marietje Schaake

Georgios Epitideios

Matthijs van Miltenburg

Marlene Mizzi

Ramona Nicole Mănescu