

United States Senate

October 23, 2017

His Excellency Chum Bun Rong
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary Designate to the USA & Mexico
The Royal Embassy of Cambodia
4530 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

Dear Ambassador Bun Rong,

I write to express deep concern regarding the arrest and detention of Kem Sokha, the President of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). The charges of treason brought against him appear to be political in nature, and the latest step in Prime Minister Hun Sen's quest to evade democratic accountability.

My colleagues and I are fully aware that any individual with a criminal record in Cambodia is barred from serving in elected office. Many of us also see the Prime Minister's coordinated actions to reallocate the Cambodia National Rescue Party's seats in Parliament – effectively dissolving the opposition party – as further evidence of his effort to disable the institutions of democratic governance.

The United States has invested in the political future of Cambodia ever since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991. In conjunction with the European Union and a network of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, America has played a leading role in providing humanitarian and economic aid to Cambodia, underpinning the credibility of elections, and establishing reliable trade and commerce – codified in the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

These elements of our relationship with your country are premised on political liberalization and credible elections. From removing independent election monitors and human rights organizations to shuttering hundreds of radio stations imprisoning Kem Sokha, the Prime Minister has undermined both and is endangering the future not only of U.S.-Cambodia relations, but of Cambodian democracy. If Kem Sokha remains imprisoned on November 9th, the final day for voters to register for the July elections, it will be impossible for any impartial observer or nation to certify that elections in your country have been free and fair.

This attempt to undermine the Cambodian people's faith in their democratic process must cease immediately. If your Prime Minister does not release Kem Sokha by November 9th, I will work with my colleagues in Congress and in the Trump administration to see that specified government officials responsible for these actions are prevented from travelling to the United States.

Sincerely,

Ted Cruz
United States Senator