

KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA



NATION - RELIGION - KING

ROYAL EMBASSY OF CAMBODIA
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington DC 7th November 2017

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Senator for Texas
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cruz,

I would like to thank you for your letter, dated 23 October 2017, expressing your apprehension about the detention and arrest of Kem Sokha and the democratic process in Cambodia. I sincerely appreciate your concerns and wish to assure you that democracy, human rights and freedom are as much treasured by my government and people as in America. I do hope that you could view the current situation in Cambodia from our perspective.

I wish to point out that democracy in Cambodia is indeed in progress. It is a fact that this can only be achieved if the rule of law is maintained and fully implemented in order to safeguard our hard-earned stability, peace and national interests.

The arrest of Mr Kem Sokha for act of treason was conducted in accordance with the provisions stipulated under the Cambodian Criminal Code, Chapter 2 (Infringements on Security of the State), Part 1 (Treason and Espionage), Article 443 (Conspiracy with Foreign Power). As expected, the arrest of Mr. Kem Sokha would raise political question because he was the leader of the main opposition party in Cambodia. This might be the reason why Kem Sokha felt free to publicly boast, as seen in a recorded video in 2013, about himself having been chaperoned by foreign powers to remove the legitimate Cambodian Government, incarnating the examples of Yugoslavia and Serbia. Needless to mention the disastrous consequences for these two nations, I beg you to ponder whether such conduct of Kem Sokha could be tolerated under the esteemed law of America. What Mr. Kem Sokha had been doing was not a fair democratic contest. In the US, there are multiple laws governing such acts, among others, the Espionage Act, the Foreign Agents Registration Act, the Crime and Criminal Procedures Code Chapter 115 on Treason, Sedition, and Subversive Activities. The arrest of Kem Sokha has full legal justification according to the Cambodian laws; and it is comparable to the case of Paul Manafort, former campaign manager of President Donald Trump, who has been indicted recently for conspiracy against the United States. It is not fair that the Cambodian Government is criticized and threatened with punitive action for taking legal action to protect its own security, peace, independence and sovereignty, just as any other nations would do. The arrest of Kem Sokha and the imminent dissolution of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) does not spell the end of pluralistic and democratic institutions in Cambodia.

The information You received that the Government shut down hundreds of radio stations is erroneous. Some twenty radio stations have been closed down to uphold the law on the media. The closures mainly affected the stations rented their airtimes without reporting to the Information Ministry as stated in the Memorandums. The closure of The Cambodia Daily was purely a fiscal compliance issue. Like other media outlets, The Cambodia Daily has to fulfil its tax obligation, but it chose to shut its own operation when confronted the tax bill in array for around a decade. The Cambodia Daily is, but only one, among some 800 printed media organizations in Cambodia. Additionally, Cambodia has 70 online publications, 22 TV stations, 330 radio stations including foreign stations freely accessible uncensored. According to the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) 2016, World Press Freedom Index, Cambodia ranks first among the ten ASEAN countries. The Government is also striving to further increase the Internet penetration nationwide well and beyond the existing 50% use by the total population. This effort to improve the communication channels for sharing information and opinions is the best proof of the commitment of the Government to enhance and not to limit the freedom of expression.

Cambodia values good relationship with the United States and highly appreciate its support for stability, peace and development of Cambodia. It does not bode well at all for Cambodia and its future if we are forced to make choices that go against our national strategic interests. We have already learnt from our own past bitter experience between the 1970s and 1980s and have witnessed the agonizing state of nations that have, in recent time, fallen prey to the counterproductive agents of change.

I wish, once again, to assure you that the Cambodian government has taken measures and will stand firm in its endeavour only to ensure that the past tragedies in Cambodia do not reoccur, peace and stability continues to prevail for the ongoing development, democratization in Cambodia proceeds in a peaceful manner in accordance with the rule of law, and multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy continue to flourish in manner and at a pace appropriate for Cambodia's context.

Yours sincerely



Chum Bunrong