



## **CALD Statement No. 1 S. 2017**

### **CALD condemns the use of political authority to weaken the political opposition in Cambodia**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), an alliance of liberal and democratic political parties in Asia, is convening its Executive Committee today, 25 February 2017, in Bangkok, Thailand. CALD is aware of the recent efforts made by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to amend political party laws in order to prevent convicts from assuming leadership positions, or this could lead to the dissolution of their parties. This initiative interestingly occurs ahead of the commune elections and general elections in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The former CALD Chairperson and Cambodian leader of the opposition, Sam Rainsy, has been continuously subjected to several criminal defamation suits forcing him to live in exile multiple times, the latest of which was since November 2015. Anticipating the amendments to the political party laws, Sam Rainsy resigned from the party leadership of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) last 11 February 2017.

The latest amendments to the law on political parties can be used to bar any politician or party that provides check and balance to the government. This misuse of the legislative process marks yet another departure from Cambodia's democracy created by the Paris Peace Agreement of 1991.

CALD is concerned that the government has been assertive in targeting opposition leaders to prevent them from contesting in elections and from performing their democratic duties. CALD believes that these unfortunate developments and political maneuverings are nothing but forms of political harassment aimed towards silencing and weakening the opposition.

CALD calls on Prime Minister Hun Sen to allow opposition parties to operate in accordance with the principle and practice of multiparty democracy, which the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement also stipulates, so as to build a more democratic and developed society that every Cambodian deserves.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

**Abhisit Vejjajiva**  
Chairperson  
Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats  
Democrats

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25 February 2017