



## **CALD Statement No. 5 S. 2019**

### **CALD calls for the safe return of opposition leader Sam Rainsy to Cambodia**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) calls for sobriety and peace as opposition leader Sam Rainsy returns to Cambodia on 9 November 2019, which is Cambodia's Independence Day.

After Sam announced his return, Hun Sen threatened to deploy the military and resort to use "weapons of all kinds" and immediately "arrest supporters" even without a warrant.

Sam, after spending the last four years in exile, is returning to a country pervaded with political oppression, deprived of human rights and rule of law, and denied of well-functioning democratic institutions.

The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won an uncontested election in 2018 after dissolving the united opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), which inevitably allowed Hun Sen a tighter grip on power. The government banned 118 opposition leaders from politics for five years and CNRP President Kem Sokha remains under house arrest since 2017 on alleged treason charges.

Since 16 August 2019, 57 activists have been arrested, charged, or in pre-trial detention and hundreds are currently in hiding.

CALD echoes the statement of Sam emphasizing that the Cambodian government must respect and uphold the "Paris Peace Agreements of 1991 which lay down a system of "liberal and pluralist democracy" for Cambodia, while ensuring "authentic, free and fair elections" and guaranteeing the respect of the Cambodian people's fundamental human rights."

CALD reiterates its call to "uphold the right for the Cambodian people to have an alternative voice in government – an opposition that will strengthen the principle of checks and balance and provide a more inclusive decision-making in governance."

CALD calls on the Cambodian government to recognize the will of the people, welcome peaceful dialogue and political compromise, and give democracy a chance to rebuild a beautiful nation comprised of a hopeful people and a vibrant culture and history.

CALD calls on the Cambodian government to ensure the safe return of Sam Rainsy and the members of the opposition and to guarantee a peaceful transition to a more democratic, peaceful and inclusive nation.

31 October 2019