



CALD Statement No. 6, S. 2019

CALD strongly condemns the detention of Mu Sochua and two Cambodian youth activists, calls for their immediate release

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) condemns in strongest terms the continuing detention of Mu Sochua by Malaysian authorities. Mu has been barred from entering Kuala Lumpur yesterday and has been detained on questionable grounds, ahead of her announced return to Cambodia on 9 November together with other Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) leaders.

Sam Rainsy, the party's acting president, is expected to be denied boarding in his scheduled flight from France to Thailand tonight, after Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha announced yesterday that his country "will not allow an anti-government person to use Thailand for activism."

Mu, CNRP Vice President and former CALD Women's Caucus Chairperson, was travelling from Indonesia to Malaysia to meet with the Malaysian foreign minister and civil society activists when she was barred by immigration authorities at the airport. As her mobile phone was confiscated, family members and party mates could not reach her, and her whereabouts remain unknown.

Prior to her travel to Malaysia, Mu was in Indonesia where her press conference on the 9 November travel plans of CNRP officials was interrupted by the Cambodian ambassador to Indonesia. The ambassador attempted to stop Mu from speaking at what he labeled as an "illegal event." Holding of press conferences in Indonesia is a regular occurrence and is not considered "illegal".

"We are going home so we can establish, so we can restore democracy", Mu said in the press conference when she was finally allowed to speak. "We have made a promise to our people that we will go home on November 9, and we will go home on November 9".

It must be remembered that Mu's current detention comes after Malaysian authorities barred her from entering the country three weeks ago and deported her to the United States. Malaysia also put in detention two Cambodian youth activists who were trying to go to Thailand three days ago, and reports suggest that they will be deported to a "third country".

CALD calls on the Malaysian authorities to immediately release Mu Sochua and the two Cambodian youth activists as there appears to be no legal grounds for their continuing detention. They should be allowed to freely travel to their destination country and conduct peaceful activities.

CALD also urges ASEAN and its member-states to respect and promote the principles of democracy and human rights, as embodied in the ASEAN Charter. The persecution of the political opposition in Cambodia is, without a doubt, in contravention of these principles, and ASEAN's deafening silence on this issue certainly diminishes its unity, credibility and centrality in the region. ASEAN's leaders' invocation of the principle of "non-interference" should not be an excuse for inaction on what are clearly violations of the fundamental values it claims to uphold.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:


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