



## **CALD Statement No. 8, S. 2019**

### **CALD expresses gratitude to Malaysian government for its support to the Cambodian opposition**

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) expresses its sincere gratitude to the Malaysian government for its open and fervent support to CALD full-member, the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).

In the past days, officials of the CNRP led by Acting President Sam Rainsy and Vice President Mu Sochua travelled to Kuala Lumpur in line with their goal of eventually returning to Cambodia on November 9 to restore the country's democracy through peaceful means. Prior to their arrival, a number of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) declared that CNRP officials and activists would be denied entry to their countries, in line with the principle of non-intervention in another state's domestic affairs. It was in this light that Sam Rainsy was denied to board a Thai Airways flight from Paris to Bangkok on November 7. On the same day, it also became known that Mu Sochua was held at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), although she was eventually allowed to enter after a couple of hours. On November 9, Sam Rainsy was also allowed to enter Malaysia.

Yesterday, November 12, CNRP officials were received in the Malaysian Parliament by Nurul Izzah Anwar of Permatang Pauh and other members of parliament, from both the government and the opposition. A day before, they were met by Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, who also serves as secretary general of the ruling coalition.

These open and strong demonstrations of support from Malaysian government officials prove that democratic principles and values can forge relations that go beyond state interests and diplomatic protocols. They showed fellow ASEAN countries and the rest of the world how they should behave in the face of pressures and threats from autocrats and dictators – democratic leaders should stand together, proudly and defiantly, bound by the belief that freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law supersede all other considerations.

In a world where democratic forces are increasingly silenced or marginalized by authoritarians, illiberals and populists, Malaysia serves as a shining beacon of hope that democratic principles and values can still guide us into the future. Its officials' unwavering support to Cambodian democrats, at a time when they need it the most, is an example worthy of emulation and praise.

Malaysia inspired us in 2018 by showing that the opposition can break more than half-century dominance of the ruling party. Malaysia continues to inspire us this 2019 by showing us how a party can uphold democratic principles and values while in power.

  
Celito F. Arlegue  
**Executive Director**

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