



CALD Statement No. 9, S. 2019

CALD commends Indonesia for allowing entry of Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy, reiterates call for his safe return to Cambodia

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) commends the Republic of Indonesia for allowing the entry of Sam Rainsy and two other Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) officials to Jakarta yesterday, 14 November. They arrived in the Indonesian capital after reportedly missing their flight the day before, although there were reports that the delay was due to pressures from the Cambodian government.

It must be remembered that on 5 November, the Cambodian ambassador to Indonesia, Hor Nam Bora, barged into the Jakarta press conference of CNRP Vice President Mu Sochua uninvited and attempted to stop her from speaking in what he labeled as an “illegal” event. Mu Sochua, who was joined in the press conference by the executive director of Kurawal Foundation, an Indonesian NGO, was eventually allowed to speak, leading the Cambodian embassy in Indonesia to release a statement describing Mu Sochua’s presence in the country as “unfortunate” and calling on the authorities to arrest and deport her “in the true spirit of ASEAN.”

The fact that Sam Rainsy and his colleagues are now in Jakarta, and have met members of the Indonesian Parliament and the chairperson of the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights today, 15 November, attests to Indonesia’s democratic credential and support for human rights. As the informal leader of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Indonesia’s decision to receive Sam Rainsy and his colleagues sends a strong message to its neighboring countries that ASEAN cannot continue to turn a blind eye to authoritarianism and human rights violations that are happening at its doorstep.

CALD commends the parliamentarians of Indonesia, and also of Malaysia, who met with Sam Rainsy and his colleagues for their demonstration of ASEAN solidarity in line with the principles stated in the ASEAN Charter, namely “adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government”, as well as “respect for fundamental freedoms, (and) the promotion and protection of human rights.” Their commitment to democratic values and constitutional government, most particularly to the independence of parliamentarians, is a source of inspiration to the Cambodian opposition as they continue their fight to restore democracy in their country.

The recent release of Kem Sokha and CNRP officials and activists show that the Cambodian government is not immune to international pressure. It is time for all freedom-loving countries to stand together and fight for the democratic principles and values that we hold dear. Cambodia is a good place to start.

We reiterate our call for the safe return to Cambodia of Sam Rainsy and all CNRP officials and activists who are currently in exile. We urge the Hun Sen government, for the benefit of the Cambodian people, to open a political dialogue with the CNRP and to show good faith by recalling the armed forces which are currently patrolling the borders, lifting all bans on airlines, and allowing people to meet Sam Rainsy, should he be allowed to come home.

Sam Rainsy may not be able to step foot on his beloved Cambodia last 9 November, but let the day be remembered as the beginning of Cambodia's tortuous journey to democracy.

Celito F. Arlegue
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Executive Director

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