



## **CALD Statement No. 14, S. 2020**

### **CALD calls for fairness in the mass trial of opposition figures in the Cambodia**

The 26<sup>th</sup> of November marked the first day of the mass trial of mostly former members and supporters of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), the main opposition party in Cambodia. A municipal court in Phnom Penh has begun hearing the cases of 129 defendants charged with “conspiracy to commit treason” and “incitement to create social disorder.” These charges are primarily the result of non-violent activities over the past three years.

The intensified crackdown on the opposition could be traced to the 2013 elections, when the CNRP garnered a significant improvement in the election results -- almost winning the popular vote. The opposition refused to accept the results, and widespread protests followed.

Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has ruled for 34 years, accused the CNRP of inciting to unseat the government as a result of these protests. In 2017, the Supreme Court dissolved the CNRP resulting in the ban of 100 party members from politics for five years, the arrest of Kem Sokha, and the self-imposed exile of Sam Rainsy, co-founders of CNRP.

CALD is alarmed and disturbed by the authoritarian tactics and the pattern of intimidation that the Hun Sen government has consistently used against its critics. It is important to note that the European Union (EU) has even partially revoked Cambodia’s trade privileges due to its poor human rights record.

As an organization that embraces freedom, human rights, prosperity, and rule law, CALD believes that Cambodia will reap both social and economic benefits if the government would adhere to democratic values and listen to the aspirations of the people.

CALD appeals for neutrality, fairness, and adherence of courts to international standards in conducting the mass trials of former opposition members and government critics.

CALD calls on the Hun Sen government to drop all these baseless charges and stop using the court as a weapon of intimidation.

CALD also reiterates its call on the government to stop political persecution and to focus on the real problems that the country is facing. The Cambodian people deserve a government that empowers and takes care of them, not one that represses them to advance selfish political interests.

For the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats:

**Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan**  
Chairperson

30 November 2020