



# Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats

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## Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Room S-1306, United Nations Headquarters

New York, NY 10017

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), a regional network of liberal and democratic political parties and individuals in Asia, would like to express its strong support to the nomination of **Ms. Theary Seng** to the **2023 United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights**.

Ms. Seng is a Cambodian human rights lawyer and activist who was convicted of “conspiracy to commit treason” and “incitement to create gross chaos impacting public security” in June 2022. She has been serving a six-year prison sentence in the Preah Vihear prison outside Phnom Penh – a facility which gained notoriety for its harsh and inhumane conditions.

In an unanimously approved statement after her arrest, CALD declared that her conviction was clearly “politically motivated and a result of her outspoken criticism of the Hun Sen regime and support of the political opposition.” The statement added that “(t)he charges against her have been routinely used in the past to silence, harass and intimidate anyone who dared to oppose the government. Her trial also did not meet the basic standards of due process as she was never presented with any information regarding the factual basis of the charges against her, making it difficult for her to launch an effective defense.”

Prior to her arrest, Ms. Seng was featured in a CALD podcast series, “The Great Asian Pushback”, which showcases outstanding individuals in Asia who are defiantly resisting authoritarianism and fighting for democracy. During the interview, she noted that she is aware of what the Hun Sen government could do to her, having seen friends and colleagues being imprisoned or killed in the course of her decades-long advocacy of human rights. Despite this, she said: “What I fear is the future of Cambodia, the survival of Cambodia. I fear for the children of Cambodia. I feel for the society of Cambodia -- my heart breaks for the absence of peace that has existed in this country for years without any respite.”

Ms. Seng dedicated her life to the realization of human rights and democracy in her native land despite the fact that she could live a comfortable life as a citizen and licensed lawyer in

the United States. The bravery, patriotism and commitment to human rights of Ms. Seng have been an inspiration to all of us, Asian Liberals and Democrats. They ignite our passion to continue fighting for democracy and freedom, despite the difficult circumstances in our respective countries and the region as a whole.

In this regard, we strongly support Ms. Seng's nomination to the 2023 United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights, and hope that the United Nations would bestow her such honor. Giving this award to Ms. Seng on the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be the world's way of conveying that it would no longer turn a blind eye to blatant abuse of political power or systemic violations of human rights.

Sincerely yours,

**Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan**

Chairperson, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats  
Senator, Republic of the Philippines (2013-2022)