



Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats

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H.E. Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen

Prime Minister, Kingdom of Cambodia

Phnom Penh

Your Excellency:

We are writing to respectfully request for Your Excellency's intercession on the National Election Committee's (NEC) recent decision to disallow the Candlelight Party (CLP) from participating in the 23 July 2023 election.

The NEC's decision, it appears, was based on the failure of the CLP to produce the original of the government attestation, Proclamation 193, recognizing the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), CLP's precursor, as a legally registered political party. The attestation was issued in 23 March 1998 and was signed by Interior Minister Sar Kheng.

While we recognize the authority of the NEC to oversee the registration of political parties, we are deeply concerned that its decision, it seems, did not take into account the following: 1) that in the 2022 commune elections, the NEC allowed the CLP to contest the elections by only presenting a copy of the original document; 2) that the CLP was denied access to the party headquarters to try to locate the abovementioned attestation; and 3) that Cambodia's Ministry of Interior issued another attestation on 5 May 2023 stating that CLP is indeed a legally registered political party.

In this regard, we appeal to Your Excellency's sense of justice and fairness by urging the Interior Minister to certify a copy of Proclamation 193 in order for CLP to comply with the NEC requirement. This is because it would be most unfortunate if this small bureaucratic issue becomes the reason for deeming the upcoming electoral exercise as not in line with international standards of free, fair and competitive elections.

We also note that having free, fair and competitive elections is in line with the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, which envisions a system of multi-party democracy in Cambodia. Relatedly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which Your Excellency chaired last year, also declares in its Charter its adherence to the principles of democracy and fundamental freedoms.

Democracy and freedom can only have meaning if people have real or genuine choices. We are hoping that your leadership, guided by the principles of the Paris Peace Agreement and the ASEAN Charter, could pave the way for a political solution that allows the CLP to participate in the upcoming elections. After all, CLP's participation could significantly improve Cambodia's image in the international community, and would definitely highlight the country's progress towards the institutionalization of democracy.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of our highest consideration.

Sincerely,



Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan

Chairperson, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats
Senator, Republic of the Philippines (2016-2022)