

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
United States Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Cambodia Caucus, we congratulate you on your confirmation as United States Secretary of State. We write to highlight some of the challenges in Cambodia, a critical member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the birthplace of hundreds of thousands of American citizens.

Since 1991, Cambodia has undergone a gradual, partial, and unsteady transition to democracy, which has included elections and multiparty government. However, Prime Minister Hun Sen has been in power uninterrupted since 1985. While Cambodia has a vibrant political opposition, most notably in the form of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), Hun Sen and the ruling Cambodian People's Party have repeatedly used intimidation and violence to suppress their voices.

Last year, the House of Representatives passed our resolution, H.Res.728, supporting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Cambodia. The resolution noted numerous instances of the ruling party's harassment of the opposition, as well as widespread reports of irregularities in the 2013 national elections which resulted in the ruling party narrowly maintaining its hold on power.

Since that time, the CNRP's top officials, leader Sam Rainsy and deputy leader Kem Sokha, have faced politically-motivated criminal investigations and charges. Mr. Rainsy was forced to leave the country and is forbidden from returning, while Mr. Sokha was kept under virtual house arrest for months within the party's headquarters. Most disturbingly, according to recent reports Hun Sen's government is pursuing a legislative proposal that would effectively dissolve the opposition party.

Local elections this year and national elections next year will be key indicators of the vitality of Cambodian democracy. We believe that ensuring these elections are free and fair should be the top priority for United States foreign policy in Cambodia. The U.S. State Department can play a critical role by communicating to the Cambodian government the importance of holding elections deemed credible by the international community. In order to foster a political

environment where this is possible, the Cambodian government must immediately drop all politically-motivated charges against opposition leaders, cease harassment of the CNRP, allow Sam Rainsy to freely return to the country, and allow independent election observers at all polling places.

Again, congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of State. We look forward to working with you to further human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Cambodia. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress



STEVE CHABOT
Member of Congress