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The Honorable Hilary R. Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Petition to Ensure Human Rights and Democracy in Cambodia

June 12, 2012

Dear Madam Secretary:

We, citizens of the United States, American-Cambodian origin, write to you today out of our deepest concern for the rapidly declining state of democracy in Cambodia. We seek your support and direct intervention to end the Cambodian government's policies and practices of human rights violations, unconstitutional land-concessions, and immoral forced evictions in Cambodia. Forced evictions and on-going land grabbing activity continue unabated and are increasingly widespread throughout the country. These government sponsored actions have caused enormous pain and suffering, with unimaginable long term consequences to the lives of many poor, defenseless people. Because land is the direct source of livelihood for our community members, our people are struggling to find ways to provide for their families. Given the government's overwhelming power and selfishness, we can only expect more of the same needless hardship and despair that we witness every day. These inhumane activities have been well documented by respected NGO's such as the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) and the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR).

Democracy in Cambodia continues to deteriorate. Cambodia has no real separation of powers, only on paper. Because the executive branch has total control over the legislative and judiciary bodies, people are extremely fearful to be on the wrong side of the government. The control runs deep, through a highly sophisticated system of rewards and punishments. Nearly all judges and legal practitioners are members of the ruling party. Justices of the Cambodian Supreme Court come from the elite ranks of the ruling party and are held accountable to that faction before the nation. The country's institutions are highly corrupt, and there does not exist a functioning system of checks-and-balances to prevent abuses. The erosion of civil liberties and systemic human rights violations are real and intensifying. The lack of judicial independence has negatively and seriously affected the livelihoods of millions of Cambodian people.

We seek your support and direct intervention to pressure the Cambodian government for key reforms among the country's highest institutions. Cambodia needs a judicial system and an electoral system free from political influence in order to avoid major social and political disasters.

Regarding elections, problems regarding voter's registration, voter's list deletions, and the level of political participation are all well document. Equally serious is the denial of access to equitable

media and financial resources. The ruling party enjoys success to its own controlled television and radio stations all over the nation while the opposition is restricted. It is a highly uneven playing field. The shutdown of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia during the recent commune elections shows how undemocratic the Government of Cambodia has become. Moreover, the independence of the National Election Committee (NEC) is seriously debatable. Twenty years after UNTAC, and after years of preparation, the NEC still oversees the large-scale deletion and duplication of voter registrations in areas known to be leaning to political oppositions.

The exile of the main official opposition leader, Sam Rainsy, adds social and political implications to the already complicated situation in a nation with such a troubled past. His absence gives rise to those elements who claim that elections and democracy are no longer legitimate in Cambodia. We believe that a political solution and peaceful participation through the election process is by far the best avenue to change only if true democracy is implemented.

Democracy in Cambodia needs to be looked at from a new perspective. U.S. financial aid to the country should be targeted strategically and subject to concrete and achievable results. Alternative measures should be considered in empowering the masses to understand the democratic process and to be better participants through open media on real issues, particularly politics. Since the government controls all television and radio stations and the majority of news print, it cannot be said that a free debate serves as the underpinning of a democratic system in Cambodia.

The ruling party has taken advantage of the generosity and patience of the international community, especially from donor nations. Concerning financial and military aid, the ruling party has known all along that few real conditions of obligation were attached under international agreements, including the Paris Peace Accords. Unfortunately, the very uniforms which symbolize the bravery and sacrifices of American soldiers were also handed out to the Cambodian military. Most of our U.S. military gears and uniforms end up in the hands of thousands of personal body guards of the Prime Minister and certain military personnel who use them to suppress victims of land evictions and other human rights activists. This is a cause for shame for the United States of America.

We believe that the United States has a role to play in pressuring the Cambodian government to honor its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We request that the U.S. remains aware of the erosion of civil liberties in Cambodia, and put the Cambodian government on notice that such abuses of power will not be tolerated by the international community.

#### Petition:

As citizens of the United States, we request that the U.S. will evaluate and monitor the human rights situation in Cambodia and concretely commit to:

- ➔ Defend the human rights of the Cambodian population from abuses by its government.
- ➔ Guarantee freedom for the protesters and human rights defenders.
- ➔ Intervene in securing the release of the 15 Beoung Kak Lake residents.
- ➔ Ensure a safe return of Mr. Sam Rainsy, Leader of the Opposition Party, to Cambodia.
- ➔ Ensure that the Cambodian ruling party honors its commitment to the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- ➔ Halt any military aids to Cambodia until there is an end to illegal and immoral land-grabbing and forced evictions.

- Call on donor countries to pressure the Cambodian government to reform to its Judicial System.
- Send a fact finding mission to suggest policy recommendations.
- Continue to mediate with the Cambodian government.

Thank you for your precious time and your utmost consideration to this matter. We hope that you and your colleagues will continue to play a vital role in channeling Cambodia towards becoming a thriving nation with strong independent institutions and to put an end to the on-going erosion of civil liberties and systematic human rights violations in Cambodia.

Respectfully Yours,



Visal Ros  
Undersigned, Cambodian/American Community

Enclosure: Petition's signatures, supporting documents, reports and photos

cc:

*The Honorable Josep Yun, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
United States Department of State  
2201C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520*

*The Honorable Dr. Brian E. Kidwell, U.S. Consul General  
United States Mission to the United Nations  
799 United Nations Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017*

*The Honorable Frank R. Wolf, Co-Chairman, TLHRC  
U.S. Representative  
241 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515*

*The Honorable James P. McGovern, Co-Chairman, TLHRC  
U.S. Representative  
438 Cannon House Office Building  
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