



Kingdom of Cambodia  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
& International Cooperation

Cambodia,  
Democracy and  
Human Rights:  
***To Tell The Truth***

*«It is not democracy to send in billions of dollars to push regime change overseas.  
It is not democracy to send in the NGOs to rewrite laws.»*

***Ron Paul, former US Congressman (R)***



For years, Cambodia was the subject of a campaign of disinformation led by some foreign governments and organizations, which twisted historical facts and events in an attempt to portray a negative image of Cambodia and to lay the blame on the government. The Royal Government of Cambodia issues this paper entitled “To Tell The Truth” with the aim of clarifying and setting the records straight on various controversial issues.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Cambodia, Democracy and Human Rights: To Tell The Truth</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>A. About the legacy of a recent past</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>B. About the political parties</b> .....	<b>3</b>
The amended Law on Political Party: Rationale for the amendment .....	<b>4</b>
What have been amended?.....	<b>4</b>
Examples of international practices on ban of political parties .....	<b>4</b>
Examples of international practices on ban of foreign funding .....	<b>5</b>
<b>C. About land Issues</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>D. About “Judiciary as Political Tools?”</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>E. About freedom of expression in Cambodia</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>F. About the NGO law</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>G. About the opposition</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>H. About the evaluation of Cambodia’s human rights and democracy</b> .....	<b>10</b>

*«It is not democracy to send in billions of dollars to push regime change overseas. It is not democracy to send in the NGOs to rewrite laws.»*

**Ron Paul, former US Congressman (R)**

*This quotation is a confirmation that the United States was funding overseas activities with the aim to change a regime the US administration doesn't like. Civil society was used as a tool to start the process of destabilizing the country. It was the case in Ukraine under the Republican administration and in Honduras under the Democrat administration. For years, Cambodia has been facing an increasing campaign led by some foreign governments and organisations that want a regime change in Cambodia. This campaign, fuelled by distortion of facts, lies, amplification of minor problems, aims to discredit and blame the existing and legitimate institutions.*

*The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) wants, once and for all, to clarify and set the records straight. At the outset, the RGC is compelled to assert the following statements:*

1. *Cambodia is a sovereign country. This sovereignty must be fully respected. The UN Charter clearly stipulates that no State has the right to intervene directly or indirectly for any reason whatsoever in the domestic affairs or in matters affecting the territorial integrity or political independence of any State (art. 2.4, 2.7). The ASEAN Charter establishes the non-interference in the internal affairs of its Member States as a basic principle (art. 2, 2(e)). Under the Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia, which forms part of the Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreement commonly referred to as the Paris Agreement, the 18 signatory States have the specific duty «To refrain from interference in any form whatsoever, whether direct or indirect, in the internal affairs of Cambodia» (art. 2,2).*

2. *Democracy doesn't equate to denial of the legitimacy of constitutional institutions, indiscriminate defamation of political leaders, incitement to racial hate, violation of the law, constant instigation of political tension and stirring up a climate of civil war.*

3. *Once again, similar to the 1979-1991 era, several Western governments are choosing to throw support to the wrong side: they pick the side that advocates disorder versus the one that pursues development, which led the country to achieve a healthy 7.7 % GDP rate of growth for the last two decades, a poverty reduction from more than 50% in 1990 down to 13.5% in 2014 and the attainment of most of the Millennium Development Goals; they chose the side that denies the existence of the genocidal regime versus the one that liberated the country and protected its people against the return of this regime; they prefer to side with the one that incites conflict with Vietnam versus the one that treasures peace inside and outside the country.*

4. *Worse yet, there are several Western governments and institutions that today continue to support people in Cambodia who are openly known as racists, Cambodia's holocaust nonbeliever or doubter and ultra-nationalists. These populists are the worst enemies of democracy but nonetheless they enjoy the blessing from some Western democratic countries.*

*Cambodia has been submerged, months after months, years after years, by reports from opposition media, biased NGOs and misinformed institutions, which twisted historical facts and events in an attempt to portray a negative image of Cambodia and to lay the blame on the government. The RGC seeks to expose the hard facts on the ground pertaining to the following most controversial issues:*

### **A. About the legacy of a recent past**

Recently, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cambodia, Ms Rhona Smith, had the audacity to say «the time to blame the troubles of the last century for the situation today is surely over.» What we find mindboggling is that this senior UN human rights official is reducing simplistically the atrocities of a horrible war, the misery from the most bombed country in the whole history of humanity (with some 2,756,941 tons of bombs dropped on it, killing anywhere from 150,000 to 500,000 civilians), the horrors of a chemical warfare that lasted nine years, killed thousands of people and destroyed some 150,000ha of forest and rubber plantations, the suffering from crimes against humanity and genocide into a mere «troubles».

Indeed, history was not very kind to Cambodia. The country had barely two decades of peace, in the 1950s and 1960s, to develop its own institutions. But in the 1970s, after a regime change orchestrated by Washington, Cambodia was drawn into a war concealed under the facade of Western democracy and liberalism. The country was bombed into oblivion resulting subsequently in its collapse into the hands of the genocide regime that killed nearly two million peoples. All socio-economic and state infrastructures were destroyed and intellectuals who were the backbones of state institutions were purged to near extinction. A hypocritical fact worth mentioning at that time is that not one single Western country has ever mentioned about Cambodia nor about democracy and human rights, let alone coming to our rescue.

After the country was liberated from the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, Cambodia struggled to survive on its own amidst a total lack of state and institutional capacity. Once again, Cambodia was punished again because Western governments didn't like its liberators and it went on to suffer for the next 12 years economic sanctions and total isolation. This harsh reality stands in stark contrast to the fate of European countries in the Post World War II, which have received massive stimulus package for its reconstruction under the Marshall Plan.

It is not surprising that the same institution that appointed Ms Rhona Smith in 2015 refused to adopt in 1979 the Abdelwahab Bouhdiba report, which has concluded that “the events that occurred in Cambodia are without historical precedence in our century except the horrors of Nazism”. Subsequently, as if Cambodia has not suffered enough, the UN went on to impose an additional embargo lasting from 1979 until 1991 by prohibiting any kind of aid for development. In sum, the devastation resulting from the illegal carpet bombing by the United States, the near annihilation of the human resources by the Pol Pot's regime, the sheer trauma of the survivors subsisting in a shattered society, compounded by the harsh effects brought about by the UN embargo, all combined to leave profound unhealed wounds and immeasurable aftermaths in the present Cambodia.

Ms Smith's reckless statement demonstrates the sheer contempt toward Cambodia's reality inasmuch as the indifference of many international officials who prefer to judge and condemn rather than trying to understand and help.

### **B. About the political parties**

Cambodia adheres to a multi-party democratic system unlike some countries that enjoy good relations with the West, which ironically are a single party system. The evidence is more than obvious with numerous political parties contesting during the last five general elections: 20 for the 1993 general election; 39 for the 1998 election; 23 for the 2003 election; 11 for the 2008 election; and 8 for the 2013 election.

### **The amended Law on Political Party: Rationale for the amendment**

The Law on Political Party that was enacted in 1997 has never been amended for 20 years while the Constitution and the Internal Regulations of the National Assembly have undergone several amendments. Meanwhile, other election-related laws have been adopted namely Law on Elections of Members of the National Assembly, Law on Election of the Senate, Law on the Election of Commune/Sangkat Council, Law on the Organization and Functioning of National Election Committee, etc. Thus, the imperative to revise this law is to reflect the legal evolution related to elections. The amended law applies indiscriminately to every political party and bears all the basic requirements that any democratic society should adhere to. It aims to protect the liberal multi-party democratic system, the constitutional monarchy, and Cambodia's sovereignty from foreign interference in its domestic election. Learning the lessons of the past two decades, it aims also to prevent distortion of democratic principles in the name of democracy.

*It is the inviolable duty of the Royal Government to protect the sanctity of its existing institutions.*

### **What have been amended?**

As would all democratic countries do, the amendments to the law are necessary to prevent abuses that run counter to the fundamental principles of democracy. For instance, the new Article 6 stipulates that all political parties shall not be allowed to take part in any of the following activities: (i) Setting up any autonomous zone that may harm the national unity and territorial integrity; (ii) Engaging in any subversive activity that may affect the liberal multi-party democracy system and the constitutional monarchy regime; (iii) Jeopardizing the security of the State; (iv) Creating its own armed forces; and (v) Provoking incitement that may lead to national disintegration.

The new Article 29 states that political parties are banned, in any shape or form, from receiving contributions from governmental institutions, associations, non-governmental organizations, public enterprises, public establishments and public institutes. They are also banned from receiving contributions, in any shape or form, from foreign institutions, foreign companies, foreign nationals or foreign funded organizations. The new Article 34 provides that political parties found in violation of these provisions shall be subject to dissolution by the court.

### **Examples of international practices on ban of political parties**

What Cambodia did in term of amending its own political party law is not at odd with international practices. For that matter, the Council of Europe, through the Venice Commission, has adopted in 1999 its "Guidelines on Prohibition and Dissolution of Political Parties and Analogous Measures". The prohibition or dissolution of political parties can be envisaged if necessary to protect a democratic society, when for example a party advocates violence in all forms such as racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

Both the Danish and Portuguese Constitutions subscribe to the prohibition of political parties that resort to or encourage violence, even if it is not a subversive or racist nature. In France, political parties may be banned for advocating discrimination, hatred or violence towards a person or group of persons because of their origins or their particular ethnicity, nation, race or religion.

In Indonesia, certain conducts are treated as "election crimes" punishable under the law: campaign operators, participants and officers defaming an individual, religion, ethnic group, racial group, community, candidates, and/or other election contestants; provoking and instigating conflicts among individuals or communities; violating public orders; threatening to use violence or inciting people to use violence against an individual or a group of people and/or other election contestants.

*In Malaysia, a political party can be declared unlawful if it is or is being used for purposes prejudicial to or incompatible with the interest of the security of Malaysia or any part thereof, public order or morality.*

*In the Philippines, the Commission on Elections can refuse registration of those political parties that seek to achieve their goals through violence or unlawful means, or that refuse to uphold and adhere to its Constitution, or that are supported by any foreign government.*

### **Examples of international practices on ban of foreign funding**

*On this subject matter, international practices abound as well. In the United States, the Federal Election Campaign Laws states that it shall be unlawful for a foreign national, directly or indirectly, to make a contribution or donation of money or other thing of value, or to make an express or implied promise to make a contribution or donation. In the Philippines, the Omnibus Election Code stipulates that financial contributions from foreign governments and their agencies to political parties, organizations, coalitions, or candidates related to elections constitute interference in national affairs, and, when accepted, shall be an additional ground for the cancellation of their registration with the Commission, in addition to other penalties prescribed by law. In Indonesia, the Political Party Law stipulates that political parties are banned from receiving donations from foreign persons, entities, governments or organizations. Overseas donations are also prohibited in the United Kingdom and Singapore. In March this year, in Australia, a parliamentary committee has recommended «a prohibition on donations from foreign citizens and foreign entities to registered political parties».*

*With such overwhelming precedence, foreign governments and institutions that espouse the criticism expressed in Cambodia by local and international newspapers and NGOs, should first review their own legislation before making judgement based on biased information, sheer speculation and unfounded suspicion.*

### **C. About land Issues**

*It is quite a well-known fact that the dramatic political history of the country has a marked effect on Cambodian land laws and institutions. Private land ownership was abolished during the Khmer Rouge regime, and many of the current land issues are related to the attempts to recreate private land ownership rights. For more than a decade after the liberation, land occupation was totally unregulated for the sheer lack of human resources and the effect of Western embargo. After years of drafting and amending the texts, the current Land Law was enacted in 2001 and is widely acknowledged to have provided a good legal foundation for land management, although additional sub-decrees and supporting legislation are still needed to improve its implementation.*

*The Government is fully committed to address land registration in a holistic manner. As of September 2016, 4.3 million land titles have been officially recognized, representing an equivalent of 61 percent of the approximately 7 million existing plots of land. The Government has set a firm target to complete the land registration process by 2023.*

*Notwithstanding these positive achievements, some land issues that remain in some selected locations in the country have been unjustly politicized. The unlawful and blatant meddling of political party into almost every issue of people from all walks of life, with utmost disregard to the existing legal procedures and dispute settlement mechanisms have complicated and dramatized the issues. Some political parties have manipulated the current land issue shamelessly for their own political gain by sowing the seed of resentment and eroding the trust among the people.*

*It is imperative that such technical and highly sensitive issues be resolved through technical and legal means rather than through pure politicization.*

#### **D. About “Judiciary as Political Tools?”**

*Charges against human rights activists and opposition parliamentarians should be understood from the legal standpoint. The 26 so-called «political prisoners» are not jailed for political reasons but for violation of the law. Political and human rights activists are not above the law.*

*Regarding the legal cases against the parliamentarians, it would be unprecedented if parliamentarians are allowed to use fake map and fake border treaty to gain political support by stirring racial hatred and incitement against a neighbouring country. Metaphorically speaking, it would be similar if an EU parliamentarian were to present a fake map between France and Germany or between Germany and Poland after World War II or to raise a Nazi propaganda in the EU Parliament. By the same token one can imagine had some ASEAN member states' parliamentarians present fake maps between Malaysia and Thailand or between Malaysia and Indonesia.*

*Relating to the cases of human rights activists and UN official, there is tacit understanding that NGOs and UN personnel should advocate and train people to respect the law, and not to violate it. Four ADHOC officers and the NEC deputy secretary-general were charged inaccordance with the law, specifically under Article 548 of the Criminal Code for crime on suborning of perjury of a witness and not as the result of an arbitrary decision.*

*The same provision is applied to the UN staff of the Phnom Penh Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) who, protected by his UN immunity, attempted to persuade awitness to give false testimony by assuring that his organization would provide asylum to the witness and her families overseas. Cambodian authorities have obtained solid evidences on this case. Ironically, this is not the first time that UN personnel from OHCHR are involved in such criminal acts. A specific case involved Mr. Christopher Peschoux, the former representative of OHCHR, who made an attempt to convince Mr. Kaing Guek Eav, aka Duch, the former commander of the notorious Khmer Rouge's Tuol Sleng prison (S21), to take refuge overseas ahead of his arrest by the Cambodian authorities.*

*According to the 2013 Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, international civil servants are expected to be impartial and to respect the principles of non-interference and sovereignty of the hosting states. But the two above mentioned cases clearly illustrate the severe ethical violation committed by some international civil servants. Instead of performing their duty to maintain the best possible relations with the hosting state they went on to engage in behaviours unbecoming of international civil servants, that are to discredit, undermine or attempt to overthrow a government:*

*Paragraph 33: “It is the clear duty of all international civil servants to maintain the best possible relations with Governments and avoid any action that might impair this. They should not interfere in the policies or affairs of Governments. It is unacceptable for them, either individually or collectively, to criticize or try to discredit a Government...Any activity, direct or indirect, to undermine or overthrow a Government constitutes serious misconduct.”*

*While international civil servants enjoy certain privileges and immunities, they are duty bound to respect local laws:*

*Paragraph 43: “The privileges and immunities that international civil servants enjoy are conferred upon them solely in the interests of the organizations. They do not exempt international civil servants from observing local laws, nor do they provide an excuse for ignoring private legal or financial obligations...”*

*In regards to their relations with political parties, international civil servants must be impartial and they shall not support any political party under any form whatsoever:*

*Paragraph 48: “In view of the independence and impartiality that they must maintain, international civil servants, while retaining the right to vote, should not participate in political activities, such as standing for or holding local or national political office....It is necessary for international civil servants to exercise discretion in their support for a political party or campaign, and they should not accept or solicit funds, write articles or make public speeches or statements to the press.”*

*Last year, Ms Wan-Hea Lee, OHCHR country representative, commented on the decision to ban Mr. Sam Rainsy from returning to Cambodia as “unjustified and arbitrary”. “The decision needs to be urgently explained—although the chances for any explanation to be considered acceptable by the U.N. Human Rights Committee are slim—or reversed.” She made her own point of view before receiving the explanations. Her statement is deemed totally prejudicial against the Government and is a clear violation of the above previously cited Standards of Conduct.*

### **E. About freedom of expression in Cambodia**

*It is commonly reported that the freedom of expression in Cambodia is under threat.*

*Currently, Cambodia has some 800 print media organisations, 70 online publications, 22 TV stations, 330 radio stations and 38 journalist associations.*

*The Government is dedicated to increase the use of Internet all over the country and today some 50% of the total population can access and use it. A government that wants to limit freedom of expression would not have any incentive to increase the best channel for sharing freely information and opinions.*

*Printed press is so free that The Cambodia Daily and The Phnom Penh Post, the two main English newspapers with a Khmer version, publish on a daily basis strong criticisms and unsubstantiated accusations against the Government, based on pure suspicions. Their articles are full of allegations, based on sheer speculations, with wordings such as «widely seen as», «the probability is high», «it is not impossible that», etc.*

*While there are adequate grounds provided daily in the articles of these two newspapers for the RGC to pursue them in court, it had refrained to initiate any legal action against them. As a matter of fact, the director of The Cambodia Daily admitted himself that his newspaper is «more free than The New York Times in New York and The Washington Post in Washington».*

*Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, two die hard pro opposition radio stations that have long programs in Khmer language, are broadcasted all over the country without any censorship or restriction from the Government.*

*Altogether these biased media are given the freedom to operate despite their hidden agenda to destroy the image and the reputation of the Government.*

*There are also opposition newspapers in Khmer language. As far as this press is concerned, the Government has made it clear that freedom of expression is not tantamount to wholesale freedom to insult or to release fake information or to defame individuals. Throughout all Western countries there are laws penalizing such practices. Why should there be an exception in Cambodia?*

*According to the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Cambodia ranks first among the ten ASEAN countries.*

## F. About the NGO law

*Cambodia is home to some 6,268 registered associations and NGOs, both national and international. Some local NGOs pretend to represent the “civil society” and boast to speak on behalf of the whole population without having the slightest legitimacy to do so. A number of these NGOs, hiding behind the veil of supposedly humanitarian or development activities, are in fact deeply engaged in political activities funded by foreign institutions and governments.*

*Challenged by the lack of transparency and accountability of many of these NGOs, the Cambodian National Assembly enacted an NGO law in 2016. For the benefit of history, the first draft law was proposed to the NGO community in 1996 after the arrival of hundreds of NGOs in the aftermath of the Paris Agreements and the UN peace-keeping operation. As such one can say unequivocally that the current NGO law is the result of more than 20 years of debates and dialogue with the civil society and foreign embassies. How much more consultations do we need?*

*The law was carefully formulated taking on the best practices in the NGO laws of other mature democratic countries like France, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, the US (New York State and the California State). The provisions are also in line with the applicable Memorandum of Understanding in which over 400 foreign NGOs have already signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.*

*Paradoxically, the final text drafted in closed cooperation with foreign diplomats was rejected by the US embassy and NGOs, the latter ones being advised and funded by the same embassy. As it stands this is the law now. How can the Cambodian Government be even denied the right to have its own law on association by representatives of a country that has similar registration requirements for local and international NGOs?*

*The law has put an end to a chaotic situation created by the activities of NGOs working in a legal vacuum. After all, the Cambodian NGO law is not so threatening to democracy, if we are to compare it with the possible effects of the US “Patriot Act” or the annual US “National Defense Authorization Act” or the Canadian “C-51 law”.*

*Moreover, the law is well in line with the existing international legal frameworks, namely: Article 42 of Cambodia’s Constitution guaranteeing the rights of Association to be governed by law; Article 20 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; and Article 22 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).*

*Local and international NGOs, armed with a hidden political agenda, used and continue to twist some specific provisions of the law and draw wild speculations absent of concrete facts. The sad reality unfortunately is the acceptance as usual by most of the foreign journalists and diplomats that whatever is coming from the NGOs is seen as the absolute truth. The link between biased foreign government funded NGOs and some predisposed Western journalists and diplomats provide a good clue as to why there is such a fierce and coordinated effort to undermine the Cambodian authorities.*

## G. About the opposition

*a) Mr. Sam Rainsy, fluent in both English and French languages, speaks so well about democracy and human rights to the Western audience. However, he doesn’t do so when he speaks in Khmer language. He has different vocabulary for different crowd. He speaks like the populists in the Western world and yet he was the only candidate the UN blamed for his racist statements during the 1993 UN-organized elections. He is notorious for his statements and rhetoric in Khmer language that are full of racial incitements and hatred. Again, he was accused of fanning the racial flames during election*

*campaign in 1998 using vehement anti-Vietnamese rhetoric and angry protesters attacked the Cambodia-Vietnam friendship monument setting it on fire before he was able to calm them. A week after the fire, attacks by angry mobs left at least four ethnic Vietnamese dead due to racial killings. He is also renowned both in France and Cambodia for defaming a member of the Government, a case in which 3 times in a row, even in the courts of France, defamation was certified.*

*He was inciting ordinary people to remove international border markers, an act which would not be condoned, and undoubtedly condemned, by any Western government. Except for some ill-intentioned journalists, everyone in Cambodia is aware that the issue about the boundaries with Vietnam is a very sensitive one that has always led to tension and public disorder.*

*To play with the Vietnamese issue for electoral gains is dangerously lacking a sense of responsibility and such an act should not be tolerated.*

*b) Mr. Kem Sokha was involved in a case of subornation of perjury of a witness, a crime recognized in all democratic countries. The refusal to appear in court as summoned by a prosecutor is punishable also in all democratic countries. Cambodia adheres to the same rule of law. Fake information released by biased sources in Cambodia created a confusion between “to be a witness” and “to be an accused”. Mr. Kem Sokha was summoned as a witness twice and failed to appear. The problem is now solved.*

*Similar to the speechmaking of Mr. Sam Rainsy, Mr. Kem Sokha’s vocabulary is full of hate when they relate to Vietnam and Vietnamese people. He even has the audacity to state publicly that the Khmer Rouge security centre S21 was a fiction or a «Vietnamese invention», and by the same token to deny the reality of crimes committed during Pol Pot’s rule even after the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) had condemned the former director of S21. This blatant and deliberate denial of the Cambodian holocaust should be treated as a crime as would Western countries do for similar denial of crimes against humanity.*

*c) Two members of the opposition party, namely senator Hong Sok Hour and parliamentarian Um Sam An are accused of forgery and incitement to violence.*

*Mr. Hong Sok Hour published and disseminated a fake treaty between Cambodia and Vietnam purporting to show an agreement to dissolve the border between the two countries. Both accused claimed that they were merely expressing their opinions. A forgery is not an opinion; and in this very case, it is a deliberate attempt to destabilize the country. Destruction of documents and providing false information related to national security can constitute acts of treason in the criminal law of many democratic States. Articles 456 and 457 of the Cambodia Criminal Code specifically provide for such offense. To publish a false treaty is in itself an act of negation and therefore of destruction of the authentic treaty. It is also providing false information as to the status of the 1979 Treaty registered with the UN Security Council (see United Nations Security Council A/34/94-S/13101 and publication of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 15 April 1979). There is clear evidence that the treaty published by Hong Song Hour is a fake one – not allegedly fake –, so fake to the point that even the border between Cambodia and Vietnam has disappeared. Regrettably, Western governments are conveniently refusing to recognize these official evidences.*

*The hostile wording used by Mr. Um Sam An is a criminal abuse of freedom of expression and an incitement to racial hatred and xenophobia for electoral purposes and political gains. Incitement to violence is a crime, under any country’s law. Period.*

*Such criminal activities are the basis for the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of these two individuals. In the highly sensitive context of Cambodia, such inflammatory incitement not only provokes*

*dangerous public reactions, but also threatens national security, regional peace and jeopardize bilateral relations between the two neighbouring countries.*

*NGOs and foreign journalists fail to report honestly on the conducts of the opposition. Based on a preconception in favour of the opposition, the information released is always unbalanced: silence about the crimes committed by the opposition on the one hand and disinformation about governmental activities on the other hand.*

#### **H. About the evaluation of Cambodia's human rights and democracy**

*It is quite apparent that the West, from their perspectives on Cambodia's human rights and democracy, assumed that after the 1993 UN-brokered election, Cambodia would be in full measure to adhere to the perfect Western democratic practices.*

*This is too much to be demanded from or to be imposed upon a country like Cambodia, that has such an extremely short history of modern state-building.*

*Similar to some former European colonies, with the exception of those with oil resources, Cambodia's state capacities are relatively weak, be they institutional, legal or social.*

*Even after the election in 1993, it is an illusion to pretend that Cambodia's democracy would prevail without danger of violent reversal. As a matter of fact, the Khmer Rouge refused to implement the Paris Agreements and the UN mission also failed to resolve the problem by leaving one third of the territory under the control of the Khmer Rouge. One day prior to the UN departure, its spokesperson recognised that the Khmer Rouge blew up a bridge almost every day! Politics were still controlled by different groups with armed forces and autonomously controlled territories. The fear of the return of civil war was an everyday possibility.*

*It was only until the total dismantling of the Khmer Rouge political regime and its armed forces in 1998 that Cambodia could finally claim full peace and exercise control over the totality of its territory. This pacification that came about as a result of the Government's win-win policy is truly an unprecedented historical success story. Sadly, it was rarely, if not ever, recalled nor praised by Western media and most of Western diplomats.*

*Cambodia's recent history illustrated by default how limited a time and space the country has to work on its state-building and democratization process.*

*Nevertheless, Cambodia is fully cognizant of its institutional flaws and weak capacity. Within such a short period of peaceful time, Cambodia has persevered in its efforts to strengthen its state capacity, to provide better livelihood and prosperity for its people and to ensure a smooth and peaceful transition toward full democratization.*

*Against such backdrop, maintaining Cambodia's stability and peaceful democratization is of Cambodia's utmost interest. Cambodia neither wants to create problems for the world again nor does it want to flood hundreds of thousands of its refugees to Europe and the US, which are currently trying to close shut their doors to the massive influx of refugees, all victims of the "Colour Revolutions" and "forced regime changes", both of which constantly portrayed as done in the name of "human rights and democracy".*

*Constant blaming, criticism, isolation, threats of market closure and sanctions are not conducive to the search of any solution. The West should assist Cambodia to find solution for peaceful democratization based on mutual respect and understanding.*

*Instead of undermining the RGC's efforts to promote democracy based on the rule of law, foreign governments and institutions alike who chose to place blame on the legitimate institutions should encourage instead the opposition parties to respect the Constitution, to adhere to democratic principles, to behave in more civilized political manners, and to engage in policy dialogues rather than pursuing irresponsible populism, stirring racial hatred, inciting social unrest, and defaming people.*

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