

**International  
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Advancing Democracy Worldwide

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Website: [www.iri.org](http://www.iri.org)**Statement of the International Republican Institute  
on the Occasion of the Sam Rainsy Party National Party Congress**February 17-18, 2001  
Siem Reap, Cambodia

The International Republican Institute would like to congratulate the Sam Rainsy Party on the occasion of its February 17-18 Extraordinary Congress of party members in Siem Reap. The broad representation of activists from around the country and public nature of this meeting, show the openness and transparency that characterize this party.

In the face of massive obstacles since its formation as the Khmer Nation Party in 1995, the Sam Rainsy Party has continued to spread its message of hope and democracy and maintain its ideals, integrity and independence.

IRI has been proud to stand alongside the Sam Rainsy Party throughout its rise as Cambodia's democratic opposition. In 1995 and 1996, IRI stood with the party as it was conceived and organized. In 1997, IRI stood with the Sam Rainsy Party during the abhorrent March 30 grenade attack where several party members were murdered and our own Ron Abney was injured in the grenade blast. IRI spoke out against the coup de état of July 1997 when party leaders were forced into hiding. During the fundamentally flawed 1998 elections, IRI monitored the elections and helped train Cambodian election monitors. IRI spoke openly and forcefully of election irregularities and encouraged others to do likewise, through both the failed complaint process and in the Democracy Square demonstrations.

Since the parliamentary elections, IRI has continued to work closely with the Sam Rainsy Party to provide training and support for national, local and women activists around the country. We are proud of our record and proud of the accomplishments of the party. The message of the Sam Rainsy Party is powerful: real democracy, clean government and addressing the needs of Cambodians, rather than serving only the interests of powerful politicians and their cronies.

The upcoming commune elections are a tremendous opportunity for the Sam Rainsy Party to build its organization and demonstrate the power of its message. Although the Commune Election and Commune Administration Laws are flawed in many ways, competing in these elections will give the Sam Rainsy Party the opportunity to further spread their message and ultimately win a large number of elected posts, accountable to the people. Every commune that SRP wins a majority in, will be a showcase for the entire nation to see the real positive effects of clean and accountable government.

The road ahead, this year and beyond, will not be an easy one for Cambodia and the Sam Rainsy Party. Many of you will face violence and intimidation. But with determination and faith in the power of democracy, you will ultimately succeed in your efforts to change the nation -- and IRI will be proud to stand with you all of the way.