

CAMBODIA

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VISIT TO WASHINGTON, D.C.
APRIL 8-11, 1997

AN APPEAL TO U.S. POLICYMAKERS

1. Call for Widespread International Condemnation of the Easter Sunday Attack Against the Khmer Nation Party (KNP) Rally in Phnom Penh (March 30, 1997 - 19 dead, over 100 seriously wounded)

We call on the U.S. Congress to condemn in the most forceful terms, through resolutions and floor statements, the Easter Sunday attack against the KNP. We urge the U.S. Administration to strongly support a "zero tolerance" policy on political violence and intimidation in Cambodia and to forcefully communicate this policy to all groups in Cambodia, and particularly the Cambodia People's Party (CPP). Only when the international community clearly, consistently and pro-actively communicates that the resort to violence cannot be condoned in Cambodian politics will future attacks similar to the one on Easter Sunday be prevented.

2. Urgent Need for International Assistance in Investigation of Easter Sunday Attack

We call on the U.S. Government to offer assistance to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RCG) from U.S. law enforcement agencies to ensure that an independent, impartial and professional investigation of the Easter Sunday hand grenade attack against the KNP rally is undertaken. Even First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh has expressed doubts that an impartial investigation can be performed by the RCG's Ministry of Interior. While the attack was clearly directed against Sam Rainsy and the KNP, the secondary target of those grenades was public confidence in the democratic process. Finding the attackers and holding them responsible - and therefore putting an end to impunity for countless previous acts of political violence -- is critical to the process of ensuring the rule of law and rooting democracy in Cambodia.

3. Target U.S. Funds to Strongly Support Democracy and Rule of Law in Cambodia

Whether national elections now scheduled to take place in November 1998 actually are held, and done so in a free and fair manner, will be critical in determining whether democracy survives in Cambodia or whether the \$3 billion expenditure on UNTAC by the world community was wasted. Simply put, the 1998 national elections are democracy's last chance -- a failure of political will and support for these elections by the international community could condemn Cambodia to chaos, civil war, and political disintegration of the country. Absence of progress so far towards making the elections a reality is alarming. Eighteen months away from these elections and there is still no population census, no voter list, no independent electoral commission, nor an agreed draft of an electoral law.

The current situation is unacceptable. The US must lead the international community in ensuring these elections take place, and are free and fair. Free and fair does not just mean the voting on election day, but it also means the process leading up to that day, the atmosphere, and the ability of all parties to compete. An independent judiciary -- guaranteed by the yet to be formed Supreme Council of Magistracy and Constitutional Council -- is essential to the preparation and holding of free and fair elections.

The RCG is still highly dependent on economic assistance aid from foreign donors to make ends meet. The international community must forcefully demand the immediate formulation of clear goals and objectives, and corresponding activities, to implement the necessary groundwork for the election. Aid should be conditioned to meeting these goals in accordance with a specific, clear and public timeline for plan implementation.

USAID funding in Cambodia should be targeted to programs directly assisting in the development of democracy and rule of law in Cambodia, such as those conducted by the U.S. party institutes such as International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). US funding in this sector for the next 18 months in Cambodia should take top priority in USAID's program plans.

4. Provide More Support for the Opposition

The US Government, in cooperation with other governments involved in Cambodia, should strongly and publicly support the right of a non-violent opposition in Cambodia to exist without fear of violent intimidation and harassment. The Easter Sunday attack is only the culmination of a clear pattern of killings, intimidation, beatings, office closures, illegal arrests, incommunicado detentions (such as in the case of KNP official Srun Vong Vannak) against opposition activists. The US Government should pro-actively intervene with the RCG to end this pattern of intimidation and violence, and publicly condemn each and every case where such abuses occur. Working with other signatories of the Paris Peace Accords, the US must take actions to ensure the RCG knows that it will be called to account every time abuses against opposition parties happen.

5. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

The US should delay extension of GSP to Cambodia until such time that the new Labor Law of Cambodia is effectively implemented and a fair and impartial judicial system is established to ensure the respect of workers' rights. The Ministry of Labor must effectively implement the provisions of the labor law regarding work conditions, forced overtime, failure to pay overtime and allowances for paid vacation, wrongful dismissals, and formation of free trade unions. Until these conditions are met, the U.S Trade Representative (USTR) should defer indefinitely a decision on granting GSP status to Cambodia.