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Statement of the National Democratic Institute Calling for Urgent Action to Protect Cambodian Political Leaders

Boston
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On behalf of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) we are expressing our concern over threats made against the Sam Rainsy Party in Cambodia. The Cambodian government has recently indicated that it may take steps that threaten the party's very existence. In recent remarks, Prime Minister Hun Sen, has called members of the party "spies," labeled the party as "subversive," and stated that the party could be banished from Parliament. It has come to our attention that leaders of the party have been threatened with arrest.

These threats made against a legitimate democratic political party should alarm those who are concerned with human rights and democracy throughout the world.

The government's recent statements appear to signal an attempt to stamp out one of the few alternatives to the ruling party, a party that has ruled for 25 years.

Cambodia has not yet developed an independent judicial system that can professionally investigate allegations of wrongdoing and fairly protect the rights of its citizens. It is therefore all the more important that the government of Cambodia affirm its commitment to respect the political rights and protect the personal security of political leaders.

We call on all political leaders in Cambodia to respect a peaceful political process and to promote the full exercise of human rights, and we call on members of the international community to monitor closely the events in Cambodia and to help ensure that the current situation is resolved consistent with the laws of Cambodia and its international obligations.

Madeleine K. Albright
Chairman

Kenneth Wollack
President