



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2023)0085

Cambodia: the case of opposition leader Kem Sokha

European Parliament resolution of 16 March 2023 on Cambodia: the case of opposition leader Kem Sokha (2023/2589(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Cambodia,
- having regard to Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 3 March 2023, following a trial deemed by UN experts to have ‘failed to meet the standard of either Cambodian or international human rights law’, Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced Kem Sokha to 27 years in jail, which he is temporarily allowed to serve under house arrest, and indefinitely suspended his political rights to vote and to stand for election;
- B. whereas Kem Sokha the former Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) president was arrested in 2017 over accusations of conspiracy to overthrow Prime Minister Hun Sen and held in arbitrary pre-trial detention until his conditional release into house arrest on 10 September 2018;
- C. whereas since the Supreme Court of Cambodia dissolved the largest opposition party, the CNRP, the Cambodian Government has been cracking down on members of the political opposition by jailing and fining them, and forcing them into exile;
- D. whereas Prime Minister Hun Sen has been in power almost without interruption for 38 years and the ruling party holds absolute power over the state and legislative bodies;
- E. whereas the government crackdown on independent media, civil society organisations and political opposition that began in 2017 has continued, including through sham mass trials, the persecution of activists such as Seng Theary and the leadership and members of the opposition Candlelight Party, the restriction of liberties and the closure on 13 February 2023 of VOD, one of Cambodia’s last

independent media outlets;

1. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Kem Sokha and all opposition officials and activists convicted or detained on politically motivated charges;
2. Urges the Cambodian authorities to ensure free and fair elections in July 2023, allowing all political parties to carry out equal, free and transparent electoral campaigns under a more inclusive and transparent national election committee; calls for the immediate reinstatement of the CNRP for participation in the 2023 elections;
3. Calls on the authorities to put an end to all forms of harassment, intimidation and politically motivated criminal charges against members of the opposition, trade unionists, human right defenders (HRDs), civil society and media actors and for the immediate reinstatement of VOD;
4. Calls for the coordinated use of available political avenues including the further suspension of Cambodia's 'Everything But Arms' status if the 2023 elections deviate from international standards or violations of human rights continue;
5. Urges the Commission to define human rights benchmarks for its ongoing enhanced engagement with the Cambodian authorities, and to provide assistance to Cambodia's civil society and HRDs;
6. Urges the Council to adopt targeted sanctions, under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, to hold accountable all persons responsible for serious human rights violations and the dissolution and subsequent repression of the Cambodian opposition;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the VP/HR, the ASEAN Secretary-General and the Government, Prime Minister and National Assembly of Cambodia.