



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Cambodia

Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 179th session (Geneva, 2 to 18 February 2026)



Lim Kimya in Phnom Penh on 26 October 2017. Photo by Tang Chhin Sothy / AFP

KHM-48 - Mu Sochua (Ms.)

KHM-49 - Keo Phirum

KHM-50 - Ho Van

KHM-51 - Long Ry

KHM-52 - Nut Romdoul

KHM-53 - Men Sothavarin

KHM-56 - Kong Sophea

KHM-57 - Nhay Chamroeun

KHM-58 - Sam Rainsy

KHM-59- Um Sam Am

KHM-60 - Kem Sokha

KHM-62 - Chea Poch

KHM-65 - Dam Sithik

KHM-66 - Dang Chamreun

KHM-67 - Eng Chhai Eang

KHM-68 - Heng Danaro

KHM-69 - Ke Sovannroth (Ms.)

KHM-72 - Khy Vanndech

KHM-73 - Kimsour Phirith

KHM-76 - Ky Wandara

KHM-78 - Lim Bun Sidareth

KHM-79 - Lim Kimya

KHM-80 - Long Botta

KHM-82 - Mao Monyvann

KHM-83 - Ngim Nheng

KHM-84 - Ngor Kim Cheang

KHM-86 - Ou Chanrith

KHM-87 - Pin Ratana

KHM-90 - Sok Umsea

KHM-91 - Son Chhay

KHM-92 - Suon Rida

KHM-93 - Te Chanmony (Ms.)

KHM-94 - Tioulong Saumura (Ms.)

KHM-95 - Tok Vanchan

KHM-96 - Tuon Yokda

KHM-99 - Vann Narith

KHM-101 - Yim Sovann

KHM-102 - Yun Tharo

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Violation of freedom of opinion and expression
- ✓ Violation of freedom of assembly and association
- ✓ Abusive revocation of the parliamentary mandate
- ✓ Lack of due process at the investigation stage
- ✓ Lack of fair trial proceedings and excessive delays
- ✓ Failure to respect parliamentary immunity
- ✓ Violation of freedom of movement
- ✓ Threats, acts of intimidation
- ✓ Torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence
- ✓ Impunity¹
- ✓ Arbitrary arrest and detention²
- ✓ Inhumane conditions of detention³

A. Summary of the case

On 16 November 2017, the Supreme Court dissolved the sole opposition party in Cambodia, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). It also banned 118 CNRP members (including all 55 CNRP members of the National Assembly) from political life for five years with no possibility of appeal. Their parliamentary mandates were immediately revoked, and their seats reallocated to non-elected political parties allegedly aligned to the ruling party. The Supreme Court decision was based on charges of conspiracy with a foreign country to overthrow the legitimate government brought against the President of the CNRP, Mr. Kem Sokha. Seventeen former parliamentarians subsequently fled Cambodia and went into exile. The dissolution of the CNRP left the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) – and Prime Minister Hun Sen – with no viable challengers in the February and July 2018 elections to the Senate and National Assembly.

The dissolution of the CNRP took place against the backdrop of long-standing and repeated threats and groundless criminal charges against its members of parliament. They had been repeatedly warned by the Prime Minister that their only choice was to join the ruling party or be prepared for the dissolution and ban of their party.

Mr. Kem Sokha, who became CNRP Acting President after its President, Mr. Sam Rainsy, went into exile in 2015, is accused of attempting to topple the Government based on a 2013 speech he made on television in which he called for peaceful political change in Cambodia, without at any point inciting violence or hatred or uttering defamatory words. On 3 March 2023, the Phnom Penh Municipal Court found Mr. Sokha guilty of treason, sentenced him to a 27-year prison sentence to be served in the form of house arrest, and indefinitely suspended his political rights to vote and to stand for election. Seventeen other parliamentarians, who have all been forced into exile abroad, had previously been sentenced in one or more of the following mass trials against CNRP members in recent years:

Ruling of 14 June 2022 – plotting and incitement: The case concerns 60 CNRP politicians and supporters, including 12 former CNRP leaders who were convicted *in absentia* on charges of plotting and incitement and were handed prison sentences of eight years. This case relates to Mr. Rainsy's failed attempt to return to Cambodia in November 2019 and the alleged plan to gather supporters both in the country and overseas to accompany him, as well as the establishment of the Cambodia National Rescue Movement abroad. The evidence mostly comprised Facebook posts expressing support for the former opposition party or democratic principles. No clear links were apparently made between the admitted evidence, each individual defendant and each element of the charges, and the judge reportedly failed to provide any reasoning in the decision.

Case KHM-COLL-03

Cambodia: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victims: 38 former opposition parliamentarians (34 male and four female)

Qualified complainant(s): Section I.1(c) of the Committee Procedure (Annex I)

Submission of complaint: November 2011

Recent IPU decision: March 2023

IPU mission(s): February 2016

Recent Committee hearing: Hearings with the Cambodia delegation to the 146th IPU Assembly (March 2023)

Recent follow-up:

- Communication from the authorities: Letter from the Secretary General of the National Assembly (March 2023)
- Communication from the complainant: January 2026
- Communication to the authorities: Letter to the Secretary General of the National Assembly (December 2025)
- Communication to the complainant: January 2026

¹ Only concerns cases KHM-56 and KHM-57.

² Alleged violations which previously concerned the following former parliamentarians: KHM-48, KHM-49, KHM-50, KHM-51, KHM-52, KHM-53, KHM-59, KHM-60. Only currently applies to case KHM-60.

³ Only concerns case KHM-60 in the context of solitary confinement.

Ruling of 17 March 2022 – plotting, incitement and inciting military personnel to disobedience:

The case concerns 21 senior CNRP leaders, including seven CNRP parliamentarians, as well as their supporters. The trial covered multiple issues, including the formation of the overseas Cambodia National Rescue Movement in 2018 and critical comments made by former CNRP officials about the COVID-19 pandemic. In court, several accused recanted their prior testimonies, alleging they were given under duress. The seven parliamentarians were found guilty of the charges and sentenced *in absentia* to 10 years in prison.

Ruling of 1 March 2021 – plotting and incitement: The case concerns 9 CNRP leaders, all CNRP parliamentarians, who were found guilty of carrying out an attack against Cambodian institutions or territorial integrity, with the Prosecution accusing the group of an attempted coup as it presented evidence of speeches about raising funds to support defecting soldiers. The members of parliament were sentenced *in absentia* to 20 to 25 years in prison and stripped of their right to vote, stand for election or be a public official, and were ordered to pay a sizeable fine.

With regard to these trials, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cambodia, in his report of 18 August 2022 (A/HRC/51/66), stated that: “Mass trials, particularly of individuals from the main opposition party and those seen to be antithetical to the dominant power base, have caused great concern and stifled the possibility of political pluralism [...] Irregularities inherent in these trials include the lack of credible evidence, failings concerning respect for fair trial rights and due process guarantees, and the fact that several of the so-called accused are being tried *in absentia* in breach of human rights guarantees”.

Regarding the independence and transparency of the judiciary and prosecutors, the Special Rapporteur stated in the same report that, “This is a long-standing issue referred to decades ago in earlier UN resolutions on Cambodia. There is a more recent turn, however, in that some judicial and related personnel have close links with the political party in power; for instance, they might sit on various key committees of the party”.

On 7 October 2022, the Phnom Penh Court sentenced Mr. Son Chhay, a former member of the CNRP and now the Vice-President of the opposition Candlelight Party, in two cases to pay the CPP and the National Election Committee 3 billion riels and 17 million riels (US\$ 754,250) in damages, having found him guilty of defamation for saying that voting fraud had occurred during the June 2022 commune elections, allegations that were supported and substantiated by other entities at the national and international levels. In December 2022, the Appeal Court upheld the conviction and increased the damages he was ordered to pay (to approximately US\$1 million to the CPP and the National Election Commission). In February 2023, the Supreme Court upheld the defamation conviction on final appeal.

On 16 January 2023, Mr. Thach Setha, Vice-President of the Candlelight Party, was arrested over complaints of having written bad cheques, an accusation he denied and considers amounting to intimidation. He was convicted later in 2023 for forgery/bad cheques (18-month prison sentence) and incitement to social disorder and discrimination (three-year prison sentence). In August 2024, the Supreme Court of Cambodia upheld these convictions on final appeal.

On 19 October 2022, Mr. Rainsy was sentenced to life imprisonment, allegedly for trying to cede four Cambodian provinces to a foreign State. The conviction and sentence referred to Mr. Rainsy’s meeting in the United States in 2013 with the Montagnard Foundation, an organization that works to protect the rights of indigenous minorities in Viet Nam. Mr. Rainsy had promised to defend the rights of Cambodian indigenous people during the meeting. He has since dismissed the charges and sentence as bogus saying that he had not ceded territory to any country but only recognized the rights of the indigenous people called Khmer Leu in the north-east of Cambodia.

The CPP won 120 of the 125 seats in the National Assembly in the elections of 23 July 2023. The 2023 national elections had no credible opposition to the CPP. The Candlelight Party — a successor of the dissolved CNRP — was disqualified from registering for the election over a single absent document by the National Election Committee. The lack of a competitive election has seen the CPP and the then Prime Minister Hun Sen strengthen their grasp on power, especially with the transition in August 2023 to Hun Manet, the Prime Minister’s eldest son, as the new Prime Minister. Following the elections of July 2023, several UN human rights experts stated that “[a] range of serious human rights violations and severe restrictions on civic and political space affected the credibility of Cambodia’s national elections ...”

In his report of 5 August 2024 (A/HRC/57/82), the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights

situation in Cambodia stated that “while the country has made progress on some aspects of economic, social and cultural rights, a major challenge concerns the issue of civil and political rights, especially the constrained civic and political space.” The Special Rapporteur made the following recommendations to the Cambodian authorities with regard to elections and related space: (a) Cease the crackdown on opposition voices and take the necessary actions to ensure genuine multi-party elections; (b) Repeal the amendments to the Law on the Registration of Political Parties that allow for the arbitrary dissolution of political parties and the banning of party leaders from political activities without due process;... (f) End all forms of harassment, violence and intimidation against political opponents, land rights activists, labour activists, environmentalists, journalists and other human rights defenders, immediately release them from prison and drop all charges against them during and in post-election periods; and (g) Desist from interfering with the rights of all political parties to participate in elections. More recent reporting by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cambodia, including the report submitted to the Human Rights Council in July 2025 (A/HRC/60/86), continues to highlight concerns about the constrained civic and political space, limitations on opposition activity and the use of legal measures affecting freedom of expression and political participation.

Mr. Lim Kimya, a former parliamentarian belonging to the CNRP, was fatally shot in Bangkok in Thailand on 7 January 2025. The attacker, Mr. Ekkalak Paenoi, fled to Cambodia but was arrested and extradited. The motive remains unclear, though several human rights organizations have called it a political assassination, while Cambodian authorities deny involvement.

B. Decision

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Reaffirms* that the ability of former opposition parliamentarians in exile to return safely to Cambodia and participate freely in political life is a central issue in this long-standing case and a key condition for restoring political pluralism and trust in the democratic process;
2. *Deeply regrets* that, despite repeated exchanges and the Committee’s consistent calls, no tangible progress appears to have been made towards enabling the exiled former parliamentarians to return to Cambodia as free individuals and to contribute openly to the country’s political life;
3. *Calls on* the Cambodian authorities to actively explore all legal, judicial and political avenues available to remove the obstacles preventing the return of the affected former parliamentarians, including those arising from convictions and sentences handed down *in absentia*, and to take concrete steps to facilitate their safe return;
4. *Recalls* in this regard its serious concerns regarding the broader pattern of measures taken against the political opposition in recent years, including:
 - (a) the dissolution of the CNRP and the resulting revocation of parliamentary mandates;
 - (b) the convictions and severe sentences imposed on opposition leaders and former parliamentarians, including Mr. Kem Sokha and Mr. Sam Rainsy, and the more recent convictions against Mr. Son Chhay and Mr. Thach Setha;
 - (c) the mass trial verdicts of 2021 and 2022, which continue to have far-reaching consequences for basic human rights and political participation;
5. *Notes with concern* that these developments continue to affect the overall political environment, including the prospects for inclusive, genuinely competitive elections and meaningful political dialogue involving opposition voices both inside and outside Cambodia;
6. *Expresses grave concern* at the killing of former parliamentarian Mr. Lim Kimya in January 2025; *notes* that the circumstances and possible motives remain contested; and *requests* the Cambodian authorities to provide detailed information on the status of the investigation, including any findings regarding motive and accountability;

7. *Reiterates* that a visit by an IPU delegation to Cambodia would provide a valuable opportunity to engage constructively on all the aforesaid issues; and *calls on* the authorities to provide the necessary clarity and dates so that such a mission can take place without further delay;
8. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
9. *Decides* to continue examining this case.