Resolution on Cambodia: notably the dissolution of CNRP Party

2017/3002(RSP) - 14/12/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Cambodia: notably the dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA and EFDD groups.

As a reminder, in 2017 the human rights situation in Cambodia further deteriorated, with an increasing number of arrests of political opposition members, human rights activists and civil society representatives being carried out.

The Cambodian parliament passed two sets of repressive amendments to the 'Law on Political Parties' in 2017, which contain numerous restrictions tailored to create **obstacles for opposition parties**.

On 6 October 2017, the Ministry of the Interior filed a request with the Supreme Court to dissolve the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) under the 'Law on Political Parties'. On 16 November 2017, the Supreme Court announced the dissolution of the CNRP, at the end of a one-day hearing. The Supreme Court has also banned 118 CNRP politicians from being politically active for five years. This decision leaves the government with no opposition ahead of next year's general elections scheduled for July 2018.

In September 2017, Kem Sokha, the president of the CNRP, was arrested and charged with treason under Article 443 of the Cambodian Criminal Code, despite having parliamentary immunity. Kem Sokha's request for bail was rejected on 26 September 2017, when he was unable to attend the hearing, after the prisons department said they could not ensure his safety. According to human rights organisations he was interrogated on 24 November 2017, even though he has not had adequate access to legal counsel. The bail request is now pending with the Supreme Court and he faces up to 30 years in prison if found guilty.

Parliament expressed serious concerns at the dissolution of the CNRP and deeply regretted the prohibition of the party, which is evidence of further autocratic action by Prime Minister Hun Sen.

In this regard, it urged the government to:

- immediately revoke the arrest warrant for, and drop all charges against, opposition leader Sam Rainsy;
- immediately and unconditionally release Kem Sokha and drop all charges against him and other opposition parliamentarians;
- reverse the decision to dissolve the CNRP;
- restore the elected members of the national parliament and commune council to their positions;
- allow the full participation of opposition parties in public life;
- ensure free space for action for media and civil society organisations;
- put an end to the climate of fear and intimidation, as these are all preconditions for free, inclusive and transparent elections.

Parliament regretted the absence of an independent and impartial judiciary in the country and called on the Government of Cambodia to repeal all recent amendments to the 'Law on Political Parties' and electoral laws limiting freedom of speech and political freedoms.

Parliament called on the VP/HR, Federica Mogherini, and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to use all means available to protect the fundamental rights of the Cambodian people to elect and be elected, to guarantee pluralism and democratic principles strictly in line with Cambodia's constitution.

Lastly, the European External Action Service and the Commission are urged to prepare a **list** of individuals responsible for the dissolution of the opposition and other serious human rights violations in Cambodia with a view to imposing possible visa restrictions and asset freezes on them.