Resolution on Cambodia: the case of opposition leader Kem Sokha

2023/2589(RSP) - 16/03/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 496 votes to 11, with 36 abstentions, a resolution on Cambodia: the case of opposition leader Kem Sokha.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR, The Left groups and Members.

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. 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.

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.

Parliament called for the immediate and unconditional release of Kem Sokha and all opposition officials and activists convicted or detained on politically motivated charges. It urged 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. The resolution called for the immediate reinstatement of the CNRP for participation in the 2023 elections.

The Cambodian authorities are called on 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, one of Cambodia’s last independent media outlets.

The Commission should define human rights benchmarks for its ongoing enhanced engagement with the Cambodian authorities, and to provide assistance to Cambodia’s civil society and HRDs.

Lastly, the Council is urged 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.