



ចក្ខុវិស័យសិទ្ធិមនុស្សកម្ពុជា

Cambodian Center for Human Rights

No 01713/...../CCHR
13

Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP)
#72-74, Street 598
Sangkat BoeungKok II
Phnom Penh

12 December 2013

Open Letter from CCHR expressing grave concern over discriminatory language reportedly used by the CNRP

Dear Cambodian National Rescue Party leadership,

The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) would like to express grave concern over remarks reportedly made by Cambodian National Rescue Party (“CNRP”) leader Sam Rainsy, which are both derogatory and discriminatory, against women and people of Vietnamese origin, during a rally in Siem Reap on 10 December 2013.

As reported by the Cambodia Daily on 11 December 2013,¹ during the rally, Sam Rainsy discussed Vietnamese immigration to Cambodia, referring to the Vietnamese as “yuon,” a term often considered pejorative. Following some progress in reducing anti-Vietnamese rhetoric in the lead up to the 2013 National Elections, CCHR is disappointed that the CNRP is once again using such harmful language, which can only encourage racism towards Cambodian citizens of Vietnamese origin, as well as Vietnamese people living in Cambodia.

Moreover, CCHR is disappointed by the remarks made describing Prime Minister Hun Sen as being “weaker than a woman.” In calling for Hun Sen to stand down as Prime Minister, Sam Rainsy seems to have made the following remarks: *“I appeal to Prime Minister Hun Sen; I ask one thing: don’t be weaker than a female [...] There is [a] female Prime Minister in Thailand named Yingluck Shinawatra. Please applaud Yingluck Shinawatra: People protested to demand her to step down and she agreed to hold a re-election [...] Why is Hun Sen weaker than a female?”* In the march that followed, CNRP supporters then emulated Sam Rainsy’s comments, reportedly shouting *“Hun Sen: Weaker than a woman!”*

If accurate, such derogatory comments, which suggest that women are less capable than men, are unacceptable. Gender inequality and damaging gender stereotypes persist in Cambodia and such comments only serve to reinforce gender inequality and stereotypes and hinder Cambodia’s equitable development. Following this year’s National Assembly elections,

¹ Alex Willemyns and Khuon Nare, ‘In Siem Reap, Rainsy Again Calls for Hun Sen to Step Down,’ (December 2013)

which saw the first decrease in female representation in parliament in Cambodia in twenty years, this is a crucial time for encouraging gender equality, in politics and in all other areas of society.

Furthermore, the aforementioned comments are contradictory to the endorsed statement released on 27 August 2013 by the CNRP, which clarified the party's position on elections, democracy and human rights. Of note, the statement highlighted that the CNRP "opposes violence, racism, xenophobia and discrimination." These comments were unfortunately pronounced as the world celebrates International Human Rights Day and the 65th anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights which upholds the universality of human rights, equally applicable to all, and the subsequent incompatibility of discrimination.

In light of the above information, we respectfully request that the CNRP clarifies its position and if the above derogatory statements *were* made, releases a public apology, acknowledging the discriminatory nature of these comments. We also urge all members of the CNRP to follow the principles set out in the endorsed statement in the future and to help eradicate discrimination in Cambodia.

Yours sincerely,



Ou Virak

President, Cambodia Center for Human Rights

Tel. 012 404 051

Email: ouvirak@cchrcambodia.org

