



**គណៈកម្មាធិការដើម្បីការបោះឆ្នោតដោយសេរី និងយុត្តិធម៌នៅកម្ពុជា (គ.ប.ស.យ)**

**COMMITTEE FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN CAMBODIA (COMFREL)**

ទីស្នាក់ការកណ្តាល ផ្ទះលេខ ១៣៨ ផ្លូវ ១២២ សង្កាត់ទឹកល្អក់ ១ ខណ្ឌទួលគោក រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា  
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September 14, 2009

**Press Release**

**On**

**The Celebration of the International Day of Democracy in Cambodia.  
September 15th 2009**

On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) would like to congratulate participants and warmly support the celebratory events taking place in Cambodia. COMFREL notes with pleasure that democratization, in particular democratic elections, and the benefits it brings to the people of the Nation are being promoted.

On November 8th 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted September 15<sup>th</sup> as the annual International Day of Democracy and invited member states and other institutes to commemorate the Day as an opportunity to celebrate democracy and participate in raising public awareness.

The resolution affirmed that: “Democracy is a universal value based on the freely-expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of life.”

COMFREL finds it highly appropriate that the National Assembly and Senate of Cambodia will hold campaigns and workshops on the theme of “Democracy and Political Tolerance” with the support of the United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). COMFREL hopes that discussions on this theme will bring about improvements in policy and positive changes to the internal regulations of the National Assembly (NA). We hope for a leadership restructuring or group in the National Assembly which, with the appropriate checks and balances, allows for minority party representatives to effectively debates and the people to participatory consultation in the NA.

Mr. Koul Panha, the Executive Director of COMFREL, said that: “Cambodia will be even prouder if the Royal Government of Cambodia, the National Assembly and Senate of Cambodia act effectively and commit to adhering to the rule of law, good governance and the principles of democracy and constitutional government. The Government should reaffirm its respect for fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice according to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Charter Article 2, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 21 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in article 19, 21, 22 and 25; and show its support for the statement and proposals of the Asian Network For Free Elections Foundation (ANFREL) <sup>1</sup> on the Vision of a Blueprint for ASEAN Democracy and Free and Fair Elections.”

<sup>1</sup> [anfrel.org/country\\_mission/data/2009/Blueprint\\_for\\_ASEAN\\_Democracy%20Das%5B1%5D.pdf](http://anfrel.org/country_mission/data/2009/Blueprint_for_ASEAN_Democracy%20Das%5B1%5D.pdf)

On commemorating this day, Cambodia is showing its support for the fundamental role that democracy plays, but at the same time, the government should not overlook existing problems and the need for reforms.

Freedom of expression has been often been limited through refusing permits to demonstrate or by delaying the authorization of licenses and then using this as a pretext to disbanding otherwise peaceful protests with the use of armed forces and other authorities.

In some cases, the freedom of expression of opposition representatives including; lawyers, students, journalists, human rights activists, and non government organizations have been limited by defamation, disinformation, and incitement lawsuits brought by government officers. Some of the accused were confined to jail by court.

The election process in Cambodia is not fully free and fair and many voters have lost their right to vote. Election reforms should be made by a strictly independent and neutral body that includes the National Election Committee. Areas that need urgent attention include: improvements to voter registration, voter lists, election complaints resolution, media access and increased transparency of party donations and expenditure during election campaigns. Other reforms include the enforcement of laws guaranteeing the neutrality of judges, local authorities, armed forces and police personnel.

The International Day of Democracy is meant to celebrate democracy and act as a reminder that the need for us all to promote democracy is as urgent as ever.

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