



Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats

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Statement of the CALD Chairman regarding the Royal Pardon Granted to Cambodian Oppositionist Sam Rainsy

In behalf of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), we extend our profound gratitude to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni for granting the royal pardon to Honorable Sam Rainsy, leader of the opposition of Cambodia and former CALD Chairman. This move facilitated by Prime Minister Hun Sen is viewed as a positive step towards the easing of political tensions between the ruling coalition and opposition and towards meaningful reconciliation.

We are also delighted over the release of parliamentarian Cheam Channy after a year of incarceration in a Phnom Penh jail. We are likewise relieved that various human rights activists and other civil leaders have also been released after a series of arrests early this year.

We are confident that this development will ensure the safe return of Sam Rainy after his year long exile in Paris.

We are hopeful that the easing of political tension will result in the immediate and unconditional restoration of the parliamentary immunity of Messrs. Sam Rainsy, Cheam Channy and Chea Poch who were stripped of their immunity last February 3, 2005 by the Cambodian National Assembly.

We appeal to both the Cambodian government and the opposition to pave the way for meaningful engagement and dialogue.

CALD will be holding a major international conference in Siem Reap, Cambodia this April focusing on the theme "Public Accountability in Overseas Development Assistance". We hope that this conference can serve as a venue where both the ruling government and the opposition can seat together to discuss important issues and concerns affecting the welfare and future of Cambodia.

Senator Franklin M. Drilon
President of the Philippine Senate
& CALD Chairman