

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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October 16, 2013

Prime Minister Tony Abbott
The Hon. Tony Abbott, MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Re: Cambodian election

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you regarding your letter of October 6 congratulating Hun Sen on his appointment as Cambodia's prime minister following the National Assembly elections on July 28 this year.

As your government is aware, independent Cambodian election monitoring groups, international nongovernmental organizations, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia have concluded that the election process was severely marred by significant structural flaws and irregularities related to voter registration, voter fraud, partisan election bodies, media bias and lack of access for the opposition, unfair use of state resources by the incumbent Cambodian People's Party (CPP), and partisanship by the state security forces.

The result was a fundamentally flawed election that has created significant doubt about whether the official results reflect the votes cast. This has been heightened by the refusal of the CPP-controlled National Election Committee and Constitutional Council to conduct genuine investigations into even well-documented problems, including by effectively refusing to consider complaints brought by the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP).

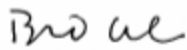
Instead of congratulating a leader who has already been in power for 28 years through a series of flawed elections and a coup, and a long history of grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, jailing of critics, and broad restrictions on fundamental liberties, we would expect a democracy like Australia to express its values by endorsing only a genuinely free and fair election process in Cambodia.

While the Australian embassy in Phnom Penh followed up your letter with a call for a transparent investigation into election irregularities,

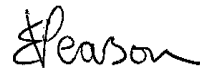
we urge you to put the weight of your office behind this by publicly joining calls for an independent, internationally assisted investigation of the election process. Only after such an investigation will the winner of the July elections be known and whether the person who becomes prime minister should be congratulated.

We hope your letter, which may only embolden Hun Sen and undermine the hopes of millions of Cambodians who rely on the international community to support their demands for free and fair elections, does not presage a foreign policy that neglects human rights and democratic principles.

Yours Sincerely,



Brad Adams
Executive Director
Asia Division



Elaine Pearson
Australia Director