

May 1, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State of the United States  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We, Cambodian-American community in America, are deeply concerned for the safety and well being of a loved and respected woman, Mrs. Mu Sochua. Mrs. Sochua is an elected Member of Parliament in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Recent legal developments involving Mrs. Sochua and Mr. Hun Sen, the Prime Minister, appear to take tragic turn with the latter having counter-sued Mrs. Sochua, arbitrarily threatened to remove her parliamentary immunity, and sued her lawyer in the case. This recrimination amounts to an act of oppression.

This latest incidence confirms that there is no judicial independence in Cambodia. It shows the legal systems in Cambodia have very little to do proper judicial exercises. It clearly demonstrates a total abuse of power to silence those who attempt to stand up for their rights.

As citizens of America, we are endowed with precious rights and privileges to act and to speak. We share belief in the power of democracy and the process by which the concern of citizens is addressed. Madam Secretary, we implore you to condemn this oppressive act by Mr. Hun Sen.

Sincerely yours,

Cambodian-American Community in America



## As I Walk to Prison



Between 1975-79, over 1.7 million Cambodian women, men and children were killed by the Khmer Rouge, among them my parents. The world community knew about it but watched from afar. Cambodia has come out of genocide and on the road to reconstruction but this stage of reconstruction is stuck and in many ways quickly falling back to point zero. 30 years after the genocide of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia has made some progress but too small. Over 2,000 innocent Cambodian women die every year of childbirth, at least one million Cambodian children go to bed hungry every night, hundreds of thousands Cambodian children and female youth are ruined in brothels, over 200,000 families have been brutally forced of their land and homes, and over 75% of Cambodia's forests have now been destroyed. Innocent lives of my people could be

saved if justice were served, if top leaders of my broken nation were less greedy, if development were meant for all.

I left Cambodia as an innocent young adolescent because the Vietnam war was approaching and hundreds and thousands of sick, wounded and hungry families were already telling us that Cambodia was lost. I returned home 18 years later with two young children, to a nation in ruins. A new beginning gave us hope when the UN came to help Cambodia organize its first democratic election in 1993. It cost the world community 2 billion dollars. I became a leader in the women's movement, moving communities and walking the peace walk in city streets and dirt roads to pray for non-violence. I joined politics and became the first woman to lead the women's ministry that was lead by a man, campaigned nationwide to put an end to human trafficking, authored the draft law on domestic violence, signed treaties with neighboring countries to protect our women and children from being prosecuted as illegal migrants but to receive proper treatment as victims of sex slavery.

I witness violence not as a victim but I listen to hundreds and thousands of women and children speak of the shame, the violation, the soul that is taken away when violence is afflicted on their bodies and on their minds. As a politician I always try to take action, to walk to the villages where life seems to have stopped for centuries, I challenge the top leadership of the government - I question international aid.

Today, I am faced with the real possibility of going to jail because as self-defense I dare to sue the prime minister of Cambodia, a man who has ruled this nation for 30 years. Having been assaulted to the point where I stood half exposed in front of men, by a general I caught using a state car to campaign for the party of the prime minister, I found myself assaulted again, this time verbally by the prime minister who compares me to a woman hustler who grabbed men for attention.

**Within days my parliamentary immunity will be lifted so the court can "investigate" my case. This is normal procedure for politicians from the opposition party or human rights activists or the poor who cannot bribe court officials. I will be detained in the notorious prison of "Prey Sar" for as long as the courts wish to take.**

Many of my colleagues in the opposition, including my party leader have faced this fate for speaking out.

**Cambodia receives close to a billion dollars in 2009 from the international community, the USA contributing close to 60 million.** Is the world still watching in silence while Cambodia is now ruled by one man? Is the world afraid to say that its aid is actually taking Cambodia backwards?

Let no Cambodian children go to bed hungry anymore. Let no Cambodian woman be sold anymore.

We must walk tall despite being people bent from the trauma of the Khmer Rouge, which is still a part of us. Let us not let our leaders and the world-community use this trauma to give us justice by the teaspoon.

Let there be real justice.

**Mu Sochua**  
*Elected Member of Parliament*  
Sam Rainsy Party