

May 3, 2009

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Common,  
Ottawa K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations are all proud to be supporters of Mu Sochua, a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize and also an elected member of the Cambodian National Assembly.

We are writing to express our concern regarding the recent lawsuit filed against her by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his request to have Parliament lift her immunity.

We are asking you, as elected Members of Canadian Parliament and the government of Canada, to voice against the lifting of Mu Sochua's immunity by the Cambodian Parliament.

The signers of this petition value Mu Sochua and concern not only for her ability to function properly in her works, but also for the social and political rights of her constituents. We fear that Mu Sochua is being targeted due to her membership in the opposition party and because she is a strong and outspoken woman who bravely advocates and defend human rights for her people and her country. Moreover, we fear that lifting her immunity would set an ominous precedent and send a fearsome message to all of Cambodia's citizens.

Canada is one of the signatories of the Cambodian Paris Peace Accord, we are turning to you so that you could diligently ensure that Mu Sochua will be allowed to perform her elected duties without fear or arrest, including full protection under the law and access to a fair and equal justice.

Please find enclosed a copy of the joint statement from all Cambodian Civil Society and other supporting documents with respect to this request for your intervention. A website in support of Mu Sochua is being setup at <http://www.justiceforsochua.org/> which should be up and running shortly.

Please accept our profound thanks and gratitude for supporting our cause of advancing human rights and democracy in Cambodia.

Sincerely Yours,

May 3, 2009

Honourable Michael Ignatieff  
Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
House of Common, Ottawa K1A 0A6

Dear Honourable Ignatieff,

We, the undersigned individuals and organizations are all proud to be supporters of Mu Sochua, a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize and also an elected member of the Cambodian National Assembly.

We are writing to express our concern regarding the recent lawsuit filed against her by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his request to have Parliament lift her immunity.

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## 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

Friday, May 01, 2009

## **Intimidation Against Opposition MP: Threat To Lift Mu Sochua's Immunity**

April 29, 2009

*Joint media statement by Civil Society organizations*

### **INTIMIDATION AGAINST OPPOSITION MP: THREAT TO LIFT MU SOCHUA'S IMMUNITY**

***Cambodian civil society organizations condemn the reported threat to lift the parliamentary immunity of National Assembly member Mu Sochua.***

The Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) MP last Thursday announced her intention to sue the Prime Minister for defamation, in connection with comments he made in a public speech in Kampot province on April 4. Within 24 hours of this, a pro-government television station quoted a Prime Ministerial advisor as saying the government would counter-sue Mu Sochua and that all Cambodian People's Party (CPP) MPs would support the lifting of her immunity.

"Arbitrarily threatening to suspend Mu Sochua's immunity, without any evidence of any crime having been committed by her, is a blatant act of intimidation against an opposition MP," said Ou Virak, president of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR). "This is clearly intended to silence her and to dissuade her from exercising her lawful right to file a defamation lawsuit."

"MPs from all parties must be free to do their jobs, represent their interests of their constituents and speak out publicly on issues of public importance, without fear of arbitrary arrest and detention," said Pung Chhiv Kek, president of LICADHO. "The threat against Mu Sochua is yet another example of the dangerous environment facing opposition MPs in Cambodia."

"Parliamentary immunity exists so that MPs - from whatever party - can have the confidence to discuss contentious issues of importance to the public without fear of retribution. It is not something which should be taken away at the whim of government officials," said Yeng Virak, executive director of Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC).

There is a history of opposition MPs' immunity being lifted to allow prosecutions on flimsy criminal charges. The most recent example is SRP MP Cheam Channy, whose immunity was lifted in February 2005 and who was then arrested and convicted on unsubstantiated charges of creating a rebel army. His trial by the

Military Court was widely criticized for being grossly unfair, and an independent expert UN panel later ruled that his imprisonment violated both Cambodian and international law. He was released after 18 months in prison.

"If Mu Sochua's immunity is lifted, it will only prove the very point that she is trying to make - that opposition MPs are not free to do their jobs without fear of intimidation and persecution," said Koul Panha, Executive Director of the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL).

"Such a threat against an MP is doubly sad when it's against one of the few active women politicians in a country where women's voices are frequently suppressed and ignored," said Thida Khus, executive director of Silaka.

Cambodian civil society organizations call upon the Phnom Penh court to deal with all relevant complaints in an independent and impartial manner, and for National Assembly members from all parties to protect the role of their institution and its elected representatives. As such, they should refrain from lifting any MP's immunity unless there is compelling evidence of a crime having occurred.

This statement is endorsed by the following Cambodian civil society organizations:

Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)  
Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)  
Community Legal Education Centre (CLEC)  
Committee for Free & Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)  
Coordination of Action Research on Aids and Mobility (CARAM)  
Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C)  
Khmer Institute for Democracy (KID)  
Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (NICFEC)  
SILAKA