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The shrinking space for civil society in Cambodia, in particular the case of the labour rights organisation CENTRAL

European Parliament resolution of 28 November 2024 on the shrinking space for civil society in Cambodia, in particular the case of the labour rights organisation CENTRAL (2024/2952(RSP))

(C/2025/1807)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Cambodia,
- having regard to Rule 150(5) and 136(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Cambodia's civic space has been shrinking since 2017, with the Cambodian authorities and organisations aligned with the government targeting trade unions, the political opposition, human rights defenders, journalists, labour rights organisations and environmental defenders, including the Center for Alliance of Labour and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Equitable Cambodia and Mother Nature Cambodia;
- B. whereas the CENTRAL published an evaluation of the ILO's Better Factories Cambodia programme that highlighted widespread violations of freedom of association, non-compliance with international labour standards and the government's efforts to silence independent voices; whereas following this report CENTRAL and its programme manager, Khun Tharo, have faced baseless legal threats and harassment;
- 1. Condemns the shrinking of the civic space in Cambodia; calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners, activists, journalists – including award-winning journalist Mech Dara –, human rights defenders and other civil society actors held on politically motivated charges; calls for the immediate cessation of all repression and harassment targeting civil society actors;
- 2. Calls on the Cambodian authorities to dismiss all politically motivated charges against CENTRAL and its members, to halt politically motivated audits and smear campaigns, and to respect the role of civil society organisations, including Equitable Cambodia and Mother Nature Cambodia, in promoting labour and human rights and defending the environment;
- 3. Urges the Cambodian authorities to amend the Trade Union Law, the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO) and any other relevant legislation to align it with international human rights and labour standards, ensuring the protection of workers and civil society;
- 4. Calls on companies operating in the EU that source from Cambodia to conduct thorough human rights due diligence in their supply chains, ensuring responsible sourcing practices and leveraging their influence to promote and defend workers' rights;
- 5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to assess changes to tariff preferences (under the Everything but Arms scheme) based on the Cambodian Government's non-cooperation on remedying and preventing human rights violations, as well as to send a clear message that improving human rights and safeguarding civil society freedoms are preconditions for economic cooperation, trade and investment;
- 6. Urges the European Union and its Member States to further explore and engage on the adoption of ambitious and effective multilateral instruments on business and human rights;
- 7. Calls for the EU and the international community to take immediate and effective action, including targeted sanctions against those responsible for political repression, to exert pressure on the Cambodian Government until all political prisoners are released;
- 8. Calls for the Member States and the EEAS to increase all forms of support, including financial support, for Cambodian civil society and provide protection for human rights defenders, civil society representatives and persecuted opposition members;
- 9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EU institutions, the Member States, the Cambodian authorities and the secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.