



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

PRESS STATEMENT

**"The Report exposes a double standard in the US practice,"
stated the Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson**

Phnom Penh, 22 March 2023 – The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation notes with dismay the "*US Department of State's 2022 Human Rights Report on Cambodia*", which was downright unfounded, biased, and prejudicial as to its political nature.

1. The US Department of State's Annual Human Rights Reports on other countries, including Cambodia, exposes blatantly a double standard in its practice, particularly in the absence of its own country report. The US with more than two hundred years of its own version of democracy still encounters on a daily basis systematic human rights abuses, among them racism, hate crimes, mass shootings and police brutalities, prison abuses, millions of pandemic-related fatalities, death penalties, and the lack of rights to abortion, to name just the major ones.
2. The Report is simply a selective compilation of events based on unverified publications of foreign-funded NGOs. The purported "credible sources" whose credentials are questionable does not lend any credibility to the Report, far from it.
3. Its narrative on Cambodia is neither balanced, objective, nor proportionate. It presumed the importance of civil and political rights over other rights, namely the right to life, health, food, education, and development. Such an assumption deviates from the UN standards which recognize that all human



rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, with the same emphasis.

4. Many success stories of Cambodia were intentionally left out, in particular the almost-universal vaccination program against COVID-19, which brought down the daily fatality to zero since last April. Other major achievements were the numerous rounds of social protection to assist the pandemic-affected, inflation-hit, poor and vulnerable groups; the rising literacy rates; the eradication of malaria; the reduction of maternal and child mortality; and the significant progress and achievements in judicial and legal reforms to clear court backlogs, to ease overcrowded prison cells and to prevent torture.
5. Quite on the contrary, the Report turned a blind eye to the dangerous and extremist rhetoric of certain opposition elements, spreading disinformation, throwing indiscriminate insults and slanders, inciting violence and racial hatred, and calling on sedition, all of these acts would be condemned in the Western world. Moreso, the double standard is so obvious in the specific instance when the US authorities pursued legal actions against more than 1,000 individuals allegedly involved in the Capitol Hill insurrection. Ironically, in a similar situation in Cambodia, the Report highlighted them as a mass trial to silence the dissenting views.
6. To charge that last June's local election was "seriously flawed" cannot overrule the fact that a total of over 75,000 national and international observers, and nearly 80,000 party agents on the ground, have characterized the poll as free, fair, peaceful, transparent, and democratic. Switzerland characterized the voting outcome as a "partial return to pluralism". Equally, to label "16 of the 19 non-CPP parties contesting in the 2018 national election were CPP proxies" gravely infringed on their political rights, if not an outright insult. Their choices and voices must be respected.
7. The freedom of expression remains alive and dynamic. The high rate of mobile internet penetration has provided ordinary citizens with unhindered access to information from wide-ranging sources, including those critical ones, as well



as enabled them to file their grievances via social media platforms directly to the top leaders. Their voices are further amplified by the robust presence of some nearly 2,000 digital and traditional media outlets. The government continues to welcome lawful rallies and appreciates sincere criticisms from various camps.

8. All charges are imposed in response and pursuant to constitutional and criminal breaches, irrespective of political motives. Defendants have full rights to be heard as well as full access to legal defense. A political party affiliation or a purported status as "human rights defenders" has no bearing when it comes to illegal acts. A crime is a crime, and that crime cannot be justified for other aspirations.
9. The Report should have heeded the call of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "Human rights must not be weaponized with double standard." If we glanced at the history of the US, could we say in all honesty that the US democracy has achieved in its first 30 years as much as Cambodia has done? We seriously doubt that.
10. Irrespective of the political motivation behind the Report, the agenda of the Cambodian government on the promotion and protection of human rights remains as strong as ever. As a country which has experienced more than two decades of wars, genocide and unjust embargo, the Kingdom continues to accord great priority to our hard-won peace, and remains steadfast in our irreversible journey to further consolidate our young democracy. ENDS

