

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300
Fax: 917-591-3452

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October 21, 2013

www.hrw.org

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Japan

Re: Cambodian election

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you regarding your recent letter 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).

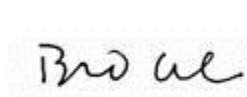
Instead of congratulating a leader who has already been in power for 28 years through a series of flawed elections and a coup, and a long history of grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, jailing of critics, and broad restrictions on fundamental liberties, we would expect a democracy like Japan to express its commitment to human rights by endorsing only a genuinely free and fair election process in Cambodia. This is particularly important given the key role played by Japan as Cambodia's largest donor since the 1991 Paris Agreements, according to which human rights, including free and fair elections, are supposed to be the foundation of the country.

We therefore hope that Japan will join other countries in publicly calling for an independent, internationally assisted investigation into election irregularities. 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.

In your Policy Speech on January 28, 2013, you declared that “Fundamental to our diplomacy will be for us to develop a strategic diplomacy based on the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law.”

We were therefore very surprised and deeply disappointed that you sent a letter which will embolden Hun Sen to resist an investigation. This letter undermines the hopes of millions of Cambodians who rely on the international community to support their demands for free and fair elections, based on respect for human rights and democratic principles.

Yours Sincerely,



Brad Adams
Executive Director
Asia Division

Yours Sincerely,



Kanae Doi
Japan Director