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## **Cambodia: Post-election tension must not lead to violence**

With the potential for mass demonstrations rising following Cambodia's disputed election and the government moving hundreds of security forces into Phnom Penh, Amnesty International is calling for Cambodian authorities and other political leaders to prevent violence.

"Cambodian authorities and other political leaders in Cambodia must ensure that the post-election tension does not erupt into violence," said Isabelle Arradon, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia Pacific Director.

"Many Cambodians have called for changes – political leaders should do all they can to ensure that these are achieved peacefully and with full respect for human rights," she said.

Disagreement between the country's two main political parties over results of the 28 July election and over investigations into alleged irregularities has led to a tense and unpredictable situation.

Opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) leader Sam Rainsy on Tuesday told thousands of supporters to prepare to stage mass demonstrations unless the deadlock is resolved. Long-standing Cambodian People's Party (CPP) Prime Minister Hun Sen has said his party may hold counter-demonstrations.

Ahead of the potential demonstrations, the government yesterday moved in hundreds of members of the security forces into the capital Phnom Penh.

"The Cambodian people, including supporters of political parties, must be given the space to express their views and they must be allowed to enjoy their right to peaceful assembly," said Isabelle Arradon.

"Political leaders must call on their supporters not to commit violence and human rights abuses against others, including on grounds of political opinion and ethnicity."

"The Cambodian security forces, which have a chequered record when policing demonstrations, must refrain from using excessive or unnecessary force against demonstrators. They must not make tense situations even more volatile by failing to respect human rights."

### **Background**

Both the ruling CPP and the opposition CNRP have claimed victory in the election. The CNRP has insisted on a multi-party committee involving the UN and civil society groups to investigate alleged election fraud, but Cambodia's National Election Committee says the UN and others can only observe any such investigation.

The run-up to the election saw a reduction in violence compared to past polls, despite CPP warnings of war should the opposition win. The limited freedom of media remained concerning, though social media

offered a new outlet for some. Improved respect for freedom of expression and assembly allowed for mostly peaceful and public campaigning.

On election day itself, many voters complained that they could not find their names on voter lists – a problem predicted by a number of organizations. There were concerning reports also of derogatory language used against those perceived to be Vietnamese, which may have created an intimidating atmosphere at some polling stations. CNRP leaders have couched concerns about Viet Nam's influence in Cambodia in language viewed by many as inflammatory.

Since the election, there have been a number of reports of opposition supporters in different locations facing harassment for their activism around the election.