

**Statement by Kenneth Wollack, NDI President
On the Deteriorating Political Situation in Cambodia**

The political and human rights situation continues to deteriorate in Cambodia with the government's current crackdown on dissent. The leading opposition political party leader, Sam Rainsy, has been in exile for 10 months and was recently convicted in absentia to 18 months imprisonment. In response to criticism over a border agreement with Vietnam, authorities arrested Mam Sonando, director of Cambodia's only independent national radio station and Rong Chhun, a member of a government watchdog organization. Following the Human Rights Day rally in Phnom Penh on December 10, leading human rights activists — Kem Sohka and Pa Nguon Teang, president and deputy president of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights; and Yeng Virak, director of the Community Legal Education Center — were arrested and charged with criminal defamation. These actions appear designed to silence all critics of the government.

NDI is deeply concerned by the actions of the Cambodian government to repress opposition voices and quell the rights of citizens to free speech and expression. NDI joins democrats across the world in urging the Cambodian government to uphold the basic freedoms of its citizens guaranteed by the 1991 Paris Agreement, the Cambodian Constitution and international human rights agreements to which Cambodia is a party. The Cambodian government should immediately drop the criminal charges against activists and opposition leaders, and allow all citizens to express their views peacefully without fear of retribution.