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October 28, 2010.

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
House of Commons
Centre Block Suite 418N
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Minister Cannon,

I am writing to urge you to emphasize to the government of Cambodia its responsibility to ensure the protection of opposition elements inside the country.

Canada played a key role in 1991 Paris Peace agreement, with a Canadian diplomat being the first high ranking western diplomat to visit Phnom Penh in fifteen years and helping to re-establish Canadian diplomatic relations in the region.

This U.N. agreement, of which Canada is a signatory, was aimed at fostering civil society and ensuring fair and popular elections. However, the country has admittedly struggled with difficult conditions, polarisation and use of public institutions for partisan political purposes over the past two decades. We all agree from our own history that democracy can only successfully exist if the most powerful political parties take responsibility to ensure that their opponents are able to share in government and are not viewed as opponents of the state itself.

Government credibility and stability can only be achieved by carefully supervising and ensuring unusually high police restraint, not just with regards to treatment of opposition parties, but also with regards to labour disputes, land-clearance protesters and other opposition elements.

The transition of 14 million people towards a stable civil society may be at stake,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Crowder".

Jean Crowder, M.P.
Nanaimo-Cowichan
JC/bd

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