

But pressure for compromise was mounting, (ASEAN⁷ and Japan both issued statements at the time recognising the results of the elections and urging the parties to settle their differences and form a government), while the government was able to put pressure on the opposition leaders⁸ by barring them from leaving the country in violation of the constitution.

Efforts to force Sam Rainsy into backing down included a warning on 29 August 1998 by the Ministry of Interior that it had filed court papers seeking unspecified charges against him related to the deadly grenade attack on his opposition rally outside parliament on 30 March 1997⁹.

King Norodom Sihanouk had attempted to inject forward movement by offering on 2 September 1998 to host "family" talks at his royal retreat in the northwest town of Siem Reap, gateway to the ancient Angkor temples. These talks between the three parties, the NEC and the Constitutional Council, failed to break the deadlock and were followed by the government crackdown.

Following a failed attempt to break the deadlock by hosting talks at his royal retreat in the northwest town of Siem Reap, the king warned in an 11 September 1998 statement, that the opposition MPs would lose their parliamentary status and immunity if they failed to attend the inauguration of parliament. He said he would be unable to help if they encountered problems as a result.

The mounting casualty toll and pressure from the king and outside countries appears to have persuaded opposition leaders¹⁰ to call for an end to the protests and agree to attend a summit meeting under the king's chairmanship and to take part in the swearing in of the new parliament in Siem Reap on 24 September 1998.

Rainsy felt ready to emerge from UN sanctuary on 17 September 1998 but said he was still fearful for his life and arrest, and that he felt he

FUNCINPEC had never been broken. Ung Huot, running for his own party, failed to win a seat in the new parliament.

⁷ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, grouping Brunei, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

⁸ The restrictions on opposition members are addressed in greater detail in the section on Human Rights. Opposition leaders were also clearly concerned about the mounting casualty toll from the protests.

⁹ Disinterested observers believe this attack, which left at least 16 people dead and more than one hundred injured, was aimed at killing Sam Rainsy. The opposition leader, who escaped unscathed, blamed Hun Sen.

¹⁰ The opposition also scaled back their demands, demanding only that the NEC reconcile ballots from the nine million issued and address their complaint that the formula for allocating seats had been changed. An earlier formula would have meant that the two opposition parties would have held an absolute majority in parliament. The seat allocation is addressed in ICG's report, *Cambodia's Elections Turn Sour*, 10 September 1998.