

Peacebuilding in Cambodia

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The report summarises discussions between the author, an officer at the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi, and organisations and individuals involved in peacebuilding in Cambodia within the context of its 1998 elections. It presents their views on the issues and describes the capacity of Cambodian civil society to address the challenges of democratisation in this transitional period. The main areas of peacebuilding activities covered in the report include elections, legal system, human rights, media, conflict resolution, the national assembly and regional initiatives. The report does not address recommendations for Canadian foreign policy.

The 1993 Cambodian elections, under the authority of UNTAC (the UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia), were the high water point of international involvement in helping this country of 11 million overcome the effects of civil and inter-ethnic conflict, as well as international isolation. By 1993, the international community had spent over \$2 billion in the largest UN operation of its kind, conducting elections and providing security for them (deploying from 46 countries 22,000 peacekeepers, 3,300 police and 1,700 civilian employees and electoral volunteers), repatriating and resettling 360,000 refugees, and administering the country generally. Canada's contribution totalled \$70 million (Cdn); it provided 220 soldiers and 100 civilians for the exercise.

The result of the Cambodian and international efforts, despite threats from the Khmer Rouge which called for a boycott, was an almost 90% turnout of the 97% of eligible voters who had been registered. FUNCINPEC, led by (then) Prince Sihanouk's son Prince Ranariddh, emerged with the largest number of votes. As such, under the proportional representation system that had been adopted, FUNCINPEC was allocated 54 seats in the National Assembly. However, the runner-up, CPP, led by Hun Sen, the former prime minister under the Vietnam-sponsored regime that followed Vietnam's invasion in 1973, gained 51 seats. Because of CPP's political and

¹Front uni pour un Cambodge indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif

²Cambodien, People's Party

³Dollar figures in the this report are in US currency.