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Prince Norodom Ranariddh in Interview

By Kyra Dupont in Bangkok
Special to Cambodia Today

Deputy Editor Kyra Dupont interviewed the self-exiled Prince Norodom Ranariddh about recent events in his country, at his residence in Bangkok on Tuesday. Additional questions were asked by Japanese television reporters.

Can you comment on the arrest warrant that has been issued against you?

One, it is not a surprise after they took out my parliamentary immunity, that they issued such warrant to bring me to their so-called tribunal.

Two, as his Majesty the King said the tribunals and justice in Cambodia are not very independent. They are very obedient. His Excellency Hammarberg, the Special United Nations Representative for Human Rights, said that justice in Cambodia is not independent. As his Majesty the King said he will not recognize any decision made by any such tribunal and he will consider me, unless an independent tribunal judges me, as the legal



**Ranariddh:
no choice but to fight**

First Prime Minister.

Thirdly, I myself will not accept such a decision made by such an obedient tribunal.

Fourthly, I feel not guilty because according to investigations made by human rights organizations in Phnom Penh and by journalists of the New York Times, it has clearly been said that after the battle they did not find Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh in my compound or in the garrison supposed to be mine.

I remind you that before the coup I asked Hun Sen to set up a bi-partite commission to search for the presence of any Khmer Rouge anywhere they could think they could find but Hun Sen refused it. The world community will not accept any

decision made by such a tribunal against me. What is Mr. Hun Sen afraid of? By setting such a tribunal he is afraid of me, of my presence in Cambodia. The next upcoming so-called free and fair elections, I have to tell you that that Asean and the world community will pressure Hun Sen to let me go back to Cambodia to participate in free and fair elections that cannot be considered without my participation and the participation of the people inside the country, who are against such a regime installed by Hun Sen.

They mentioned an amnesty to let you come back to participate in the election?

I am a reasonable man. I am not a crazy man. It means that I like to, as asked by Asean recently, to be in dialogue with Phnom Penh. I am not going back without a real guarantee for my safety and for my freedom. Without such a clear guarantee... I am not going back to face trial. They can judge me and later the trial if his Majesty the King is willing to give me any amnesty, it is up to him to do so. According to Mr. Hun Sen he said he would favor amnesty but that I have to go back home, be put in jail and after being granted amnesty. But as I tell you, I am not a crazy man.

Can you tell us any details about the audience in Beijing today?

It is premature, too early to talk about the outcome of the King my father to the Troika, Chea Sim, Hun Sen, Ung Huot. I hope that you have noticed that I said Chea Sim, Hun Sen, and Ung Huot so I don't recognize Ung Huot as the First PM — I still am the legal First PM. From what I have read... my father appears to consider me as First PM and he will call Ung Huot His Excellency. The King, my Father, has received them in their capacity of Kaun Chao, meaning peaceful children, and in the framework of a non-political audience.

Is there no possibility that his Majesty the King approves Ung Huot as First PM?

I think it is not necessary to him to accept Ung Huot as First PM. He already let Samdech Chea Sim take the responsibility before the Nation and His-

tory. He said already in clear manner that he, as the King, could not give Ung Huot the title of First PM.

What do you think of the [possible] abdication of the King?

I think that this is a signal to Phnom Penh to show them please don't ask me to do this or that that I don't want to. As far as I am concerned, I am happy [for my father to abdicate]. It doesn't mean I will replace him. I like him to be our King but if he abdicates he can play a political role, he can even struggle to bring democracy and freedom back to Cambodia and play a positive role for the future of Cambodia.

If your Father decided to abdicate, what will be your position and who do you think would take his succession?

If my Father abdicated, and I hope he will not, he can take part in the struggle. But I have to say that if the King abdicates, who will elect the [new] King? The President of the National Assembly, the two Vice President, the two Prime Ministers, and the two chiefs of Monks, and I do not believe that Chea Sim will vote for me and I do not believe that Loy Sim Chheang, who has just allowed the military court to bring me to trial, will vote for me. I don't believe that Hun Sen and Ung Huot will vote for me either. Only Son Soubert and the chiefs of monks. So there are no risks for me to be the next King. I have to say that I do not have any desire to be the next King of Cambodia. My only desire is justice to the people of Cambodia and to allow them to have free and fair elections as soon as possible, allow me without threats to my life to go back and take part in the elections.

What about the King's mention of his return to Cambodia to attend the Buddhist prayer for peace?

I welcome that because His Majesty will not go to Phnom Penh, the administrative and political capital, but to Siem Reap, to Angkor Wat, the siege of our dynasty, the Cambodian King's dynasty. It is also the religious place and if His Majesty goes there without staying in Phnom

Penh to pray for the people of Cambodia, as a Cambodian I simply welcome that because what we need for our country is peace and stability and the stop of fighting. The people of Cambodia who I have supported for so many years deserve peace and stability.

How do you analyze the current military situation in O Smach and Samrong?

I won't do a very long comment on that because since the beginning I said that I should concentrate on the political and the diplomatic struggle instead of the military one. But I have to make clear that if the world community does not put a particular pressure on Hun Sen to have him accept a peaceful solution, I fear that there will be not only a recurrence but an increase of the civil war in Cambodia. I do not want it because any civil war means more destruction, more suffering for my people.

And what about the soldiers' supporters who are fighting?

We have only one army now in Cambodia — the RCAF led by Gen. Nhiek Bun Chhay who is my general, my supporter. The RCAF can be considered as a legal one, the one defending the Constitution of Cambodia. But in the same RCAF there's another part led by Hun Sen who is not legal because that army participated in the coup d'etat. Hun Sen will bring me to his court, by saying that I betrayed the country and created instability. I have to recall Hun Sen that the army in Cambodia has to be politically neutral and not participate in any coup d'etat and Hun Sen has used our army to stage the coup d'etat against me and other MPs and members of the government and must be sentenced to a tribunal.

Do you have a tactic to ask Asean and Japan to support you and not Hun Sen?

I have never asked Japan or Asean to support me but to help the people of Cambodia including myself, ministers out of the country, including MPs, journalists, students and people outside the country and the people inside Cambodia who fight to restore peace, stability, and democracy. You used to say Hun

Sen has ousted me. In fact with his coup d'etat Hun Sen did not oust me but he ousted democracy in my country — that's why I have no choice but to fight. Hun Sen with his coup d'etat does not give me any other choice but to fight to restore peace and democracy. Please Asean, Japan, don't recognize any regime coming out of an illegal and bloody coup d'Etat. Help all the Cambodians including myself who are fighting to bring back peace and democracy to Cambodia.

About the cooperation in Anlong Veng — is it continuing?

What cooperation? I do not have any cooperation with Anlong Veng. I haven't had any real direct negotiation with Anlong Veng. I have to say that a long time ago I stopped negotiating with Anlong Veng. You can check it. Even I am not allowed to go to the border to Surin and to O Smach to see my people. Gen. Chavalit doesn't let me go so how could I go to Anlong Veng and make any negotiations?

There's been some informa-



Hun Sen: must bring peace back to Cambodia

tion that you had been to Surin already?

No. In front of my villa there are police officers and they escorted me from the airport to this residence on Saturday. Journalists waited for me in Surin but the fact is that I never left this place.

Don't you need the KR forces to fight against the power gained by Hun Sen?

One, my priority is a political and diplomatic one instead of military struggle. Second, I cannot prevent Nhiek' Bun Chhay and my followers and the KR from struggling and fighting through the use of arms and weapons against Hun Sen.

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