



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Cambodia February 2021

The Cambodian Genocide caused the death of two million Cambodians. The targets of the genocide included officials of the former regime, intellectuals, former city dwellers, Cham Muslims, Vietnamese, Buddhist monks, and Christians. The Khmer Rouge communist regime forced Cambodians to work from dawn to dusk on collective farms and infrastructure projects in order to turn Cambodia into an agrarian utopia. Instead, they turned Cambodia into a hell on earth. Over 1.5 million people died from exhaustion, disease, or famine. Another 500,000 Cambodians who were deemed disobedient were murdered in the Khmer Rouge "killing fields."

Dr. Gregory Stanton, Founding President of Genocide Watch and Director of the Cambodian Genocide Project, was instrumental in creation of the [Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia](#) (ECCC), the "Khmer Rouge Tribunal." Finally established in 2006, the tribunal has both Cambodian and UN appointed international prosecutors and judges. It has brought a few top leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime to justice. Three top leaders, Nuon Chea (Brother number 2), Khieu Samphan, and Duch were convicted. Ieng Sary died while on trial, Ieng Thirith was ruled unfit to stand trial, and Pol Pot died before he could be arrested. The Cambodian government has refused to permit any further indictments.

Since UN-supervised elections in 1993, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and Prime Minister Hun Sen have dominated the Cambodian government. A crackdown on human rights began in 2017, targeting the media, nongovernmental organizations, and political opponents. Members of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), the CPP's main competitor, have faced harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention.

Demonstrators peacefully protesting the arrest of opposition leaders have been violently attacked. In 2017, the CNRP was dissolved based on the government's allegation that the party's leaders were conspiring to overthrow the government. The CNRP was banned from the 2018 elections, and the CPP won every seat in the National Assembly.

Cambodia launched an [anti-drug campaign](#) in January 2017. Police targeted poor addicts disproportionately. Those sent to drug detention centers face torture. Due to this campaign, the prison population doubled by 2019, leading to severe overcrowding.

Prime Minister Hun Sen used the COVID-19 crisis to pass a [national emergency](#) law that gives the government unchecked power to suppress freedom of expression, association, and assembly. The law would allow Hun Sen to target his critics by monitoring private communications, censoring independent media outlets, and giving significant fines and prison sentences for vaguely defined criminal offenses.

Genocide Watch considers Cambodia to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination**. The CPP arbitrarily detains opposition activists and has banned the main opposition political party. Cambodia's anti-drug campaign tortures those sent to drug detention centers.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Cambodia should close its drug detention centers and create drug treatment programs. An anti-drug policy that relies on punishment is not only inhumane, but it is also ineffective.
- Donor nations should fund creation of a comprehensive drug treatment program for Cambodia.
- Donor nations should fund anti-corruption and anti-torture training programs for police.
- Cambodia should allow genuinely free elections, including participation by the CNRP.
- The U.S. and E.U. should invoke Global Magnitsky sanctions against Cambodian leaders who contribute to violations of human rights.
- Donors should generously fund genocide education by the Documentation Center of Cambodia.