



global witness

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Visit of Cambodian Prime Minister would undermine Labour's anti-corruption pledges, warns Global Witness

The government should revoke the visa for Cambodia's prime minister Hun Sen who is set to visit the UK this week, said campaign group Global Witness today. Failure to do so would signify a failure by the Labour government to live up to its commitments to fight corruption and promote development, said Global Witness.

According to reports, Hun Sen is due to visit Bristol tomorrow (Thursday 16 July) to attend his son's PhD graduation ceremony. The news comes at a time of mounting international criticism over increasing levels of institutionalised corruption, repression and human rights abuse in Cambodia.

"Cambodia today is a country for sale," said Global Witness campaigner, Eleanor Nichol. "Hun Sen's regime has presided over a process of grand corruption which has seriously undermined poverty alleviation in Cambodia, but Europe and the UK continue to welcome him and his entourage. Meanwhile, gaps in Cambodia's state services are covered by the UK taxpayer through overseas aid."

The visit comes just as the UK government pushes ahead with the introduction of an anti-bribery bill geared towards bringing the UK in line with its international obligations on tackling graft in other countries.

"The anticipated anti-bribery bill is welcome, but the government should not neglect other obvious steps which can be taken within its own borders to cut down on overseas corruption and incentivise development," said Nichol.

At last week's G8 meeting and in a recently published DFID White Paper, the UK Government recommitted to increasing its overseas aid to the level of 0.7% of GDP. This is a pledge that the Conservative Party also stands by.

"Keeping aid promises is welcome and important, but with additional aid comes responsibility to ensure effectiveness. Throwing money at countries with poor governance could do more harm than good," said Nichol. "The UK and others must create tough disincentives for developmentally damaging, institutionalised corruption of the sort that we see in Cambodia. They should start by denying safe haven to the leaders of such regimes."

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[Global Witness](#) exposes the corrupt exploitation of natural resources and international trade systems, to drive campaigns that end impunity, resource-linked conflict, and human rights and environmental abuses. Global Witness was co-nominated for the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for its leading work on 'conflict diamonds' and awarded the 2007 Commitment to Development Ideas in Action Award, sponsored jointly by Washington DC based Center for Global Development and Foreign Policy magazine.