

## Khmer Rouge

*From Mr Paresh Motia*

Sir: The suggestion (23 May) that the British government will press for the removal of the Prince Sihanouk-led coalition at the UN General Assembly and allow the Cambodian seat to be left vacant is to be welcomed. Thousands of people in the UK and elsewhere have campaigned for this during the last 11 years.

The call for free and fair elections in Cambodia under direct UN administration, however, needs to be viewed critically. Should the Khmer Rouge be allowed to stand?

If we use the criterion of judging governments by their past record, as advocated by the present British government, then the answer is no.

Pol Pot's government was not democratically elected and has

and the rule of law, as we understand it, ceased to exist in Cambodia between 1975-79. Over one million people were executed without due process of law.

Why should we now allow the Khmer Rouge the "oxygen" of legitimacy by letting it take part in free elections? The crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge during its reign allow us to exclude them from participating in the democratic process just as convicted criminals in the UK are excluded from voting in elections or standing for Parliament.

By allowing the Khmer Rouge to take part in current negotiations and possible free elections in Cambodia, the British government is adopting double standards and undermining its credibility.

Yours faithfully,  
PARESH MOTIA

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