



CCHR PRESS RELEASE - Phnom Penh, 27 April 2021

The Cambodia Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”) marks World Press Freedom Day

3 May 2021 marks World Press Freedom Day, a day to honor the crucial role that the journalists play in delivering accurate and reliable information to the public, sometimes at the risk of their lives, and to recall the importance of press freedom in promoting good governance and democracy. This day also serves as a reminder that governments around the world need to fulfill their obligation to promote and respect press freedom and enable a free and vibrant media landscape.

Unfortunately, CCHR observes that independent media outlets and journalists in Cambodia continue to face numerous barriers to conducting their legitimate reporting work freely and without self-censorship. Ongoing targeting of independent media outlets and journalists for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression continues to plague Cambodian society. Physical attacks against journalists, including deaths, revocation of media licenses, and judicial harassment remain common tactics used to silence critical voices. In 2020, over 70 journalists were judicially harassed for their reporting work and multiple attacks, threats with violence against journalists, and even the suspicious death of a journalist were recorded, showing a worrying pattern of intimidation and targeting of the press. Cambodian authorities have also so far failed to undertake effective, independent, and transparent investigations into the deaths of the 13 journalists who were murdered in the two last decades, and perpetrators are yet to be prosecuted in accordance with international human rights standards.

Instead, the RGC has pushed for more repressive legislation that further undermine fundamental freedoms, including press freedom. For instance, a directive dated 21 January 2021 from the General Commissariat of the National Police instructing provincial and municipal police to prohibit journalists from filming police investigations on criminal activities comes as the most recent blow to press freedom.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worryingly heightened authorities’ intolerance to criticism, and journalists have become increasingly vulnerable to judicial harassment and prosecution for their legitimate reporting activities on the topic. This has created a chilling effect among independent reporters, exacerbated self-censorship, and hampered citizens’ access to vital information. The role of the media is more vital than ever in this time of global health crisis as it enables the wide dissemination of Covid-related information to the public across the country. It is therefore urgent that the Government recognizes the value of journalists’ work and ensures that they can carry out their mission safely and free of fear. Further, it is also equally important to encourage journalists to conduct their investigative and reporting duties in a professional and independent manner to ensure that they deliver accurate and reliable information to the public and contribute to improving governance.

In the context of the continued deterioration of the media environment in Cambodia, it is all the more crucial to recall that without a free and independent media, democracy cannot thrive.

To mark World Press Freedom Day this year, CCHR would like to provide a list of its online campaign activities aimed to educate the public about this day and freedom of expression and raise awareness

about the roles of journalists in a democratic society. Please join CCHR for the following events this month:

- On 27 April, CCHR will conduct a radio talk show about the status of press freedom in Cambodia.
- From 28-30 April and on 1 May, CCHR will post 4 videos, made by youth groups, which discuss the freedom of expression.
- On 2 May, CCHR will conduct an online discussion with youths who won a short video competition under the theme “Freedom of Expression.”
- On 2 May, CCHR will repost a VOX POP video showcasing the opinions of journalists, media students, LGBTIQ individuals, monks, and ordinary citizens on the importance of press freedom and how a free media can promote human rights in Cambodia.
- On 3 May, CCHR will repost a video animation that discusses press freedom and the role of journalists in a democratic society. CCHR will also release a joint statement with NGO partners.
- On 4 May, CCHR will conduct a radio talk show about Press Freedom during Covid-19.
- On 4 May, CCHR will repost the video which is talking about the role of journalist during Covid-19.

For more information, please contact CCHR’s Promoting and Protecting Freedom of Expression and Independent Media Project Coordinator, Mr. Houn Phorn, at phorn@cchrcambodia.org or 070757884.

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Notes to the Editor:

Founded in November 2002, CCHR is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights – primarily civil and political rights in Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the global network for freedom of expression, and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. CCHR is also a member of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) SOS-Torture Network and OECD Watch.

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal www.sithi.org is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms and the 2013 winner of the Communication for Social Change Award awarded by the Centre for Communication and Social Change at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.