



Joint Statement

Phnom Penh, 3 May 2024 — On 2 May 2024, Cambodian civil society organizations, media associations, media outlets and development partners jointly hosted an event to commemorate the 31st anniversary of World Press Freedom Day. Around 222 participants, including journalists, civil society representatives, youth, and other stakeholders, joined the event physically while the other joined through social media live, to celebrate the crucial role of journalism in addressing the environmental crisis.

The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day is "*A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the Face of the Environmental Crisis*," emphasizing the critical role of a free and independent press in addressing environmental challenges. Indeed, journalists are instrumental in raising awareness about climate change, holding authorities accountable, and promoting solutions.

In Cambodia, journalists reporting on environmental issues often face intimidation, harassment, and even violence. According to CamboJA's latest Cambodian Journalism Situation Report, 32 cases of harassment against journalists were recorded in 2023, including 15 cases of legal intimidation. Seven out of these 32 cases were related to reporting on environmental issues. From January to March 2024, CamboJA also recorded 10 cases of harassment against journalists, including seven instances of legal intimidation.

Similarly, according to CCHR, ADHOC and the Solidarity Center's latest Cambodia Fundamental Freedoms Monitor, 26 journalists faced restrictions or sanctions for doing their jobs in 2023. Reporters were brought in for questioning after investigating or reporting on issues such as illegal business activities, corruption, and land disputes. In five incidents, media outlets or journalists were faced with legal threats and ordered to revise, or refrain from publishing, their articles. There were also six instances of journalists working for independent media outlets being attacked or injured, and four cases where journalists had their materials confiscated while on duty. The lack of accountability for these incidents is deeply troubling and raises significant concerns about excessive interference in journalists' activities. Considering the pivotal role journalism plays in advocating for environmental solutions and best practices, we, the undersigned civil society groups and media associations dedicated to promoting access to information, press freedom, and freedom of expression in Cambodia, call for increased support from development partners for independent media and civil society organizations providing protection and emergency assistance to journalists at risk.

We further call upon the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to prioritize the following requests:

1. Ensure an environment, both online and offline, that is free, safe, and secure for journalists and news outlets to fulfill their professional duties without constraints or apprehension, particularly when it comes to reporting on environmental issues;
2. Stop all forms of harassment against media houses and journalists who report on "sensitive" social issues;
3. Stop employing restrictive criminal provisions to unfairly prosecute journalists for carrying out their legitimate duties;

4. Expedite the adoption of a draft Law on Access to Information that aligns with international standards, and ensure its rigorous implementation;
5. Engage in open consultations with relevant stakeholders to discuss amendments to the Law on the Press;
6. Combat gender-based violence targeting female journalists and take the necessary measures to increase female representation within the journalism sector.

This joint statement is endorsed by:

1. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
2. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
4. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
5. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
6. The Cambodian Youth Network Association (CYN)
7. Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP)
8. Women's Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC)
9. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
10. Transparency International Cambodia (TIC)
11. Cambodian Female Journalists (CFJ)

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