

Joint Statement

Ensure Swift Justice for Journalist Murdered in Siem Reap

Phnom Penh, 10 December 2024— We, the undersigned civil society groups, are outraged by the murder of Chhoeung Chheng, a journalist working with Kampuchea Aphiwat news website and has previously reported on deforestation, who was fatally shot in Siem Reap province.

Chheng, 63, was shot in the abdomen by an assailant on December 4 as he was travelling through Chi Kraeng district in Siem Reap province. He was first taken to a commune health center and later transferred to the provincial hospital where he underwent surgery on December 5. Sadly, Chheng succumbed to his injuries during the night of December 7. Authorities have released [a statement](#) announcing that they have apprehended a suspect who has reportedly confessed to shooting Chheng over a personal conflict.

This is the first murder of a journalist in Cambodia [since 2014](#), when Taing Try was killed while also reporting on illegal logging, but [documented cases](#) of harassment against journalists have surged over 2024 compared to 2023 and we urge the government to ensure the rights of journalists are protected. This repression has been directed at journalists covering sensitive issues like environmental destruction, human trafficking, forced labour and crime in the country.

Journalists need to be free to report on the facts without fear of retribution. This horrific murder follows years of vilification, threats and imprisonment of journalists in Cambodia, increasing the impunity around crimes against them. Often crimes against journalists working in Cambodia go unpunished, undermining media freedoms in the country, which has recently seen the shuttering of the Cambodia Daily in 2017 and Voice of Democracy in 2023, and the forced sale of the Phnom Penh Post in 2018. In the past two years, Cambodia fell nine places in [Reporters Without Borders'](#) World Press Freedom Index, ranking 151st out of 180.

No journalist, irrespective of who they work for, deserves to die for their work and we strongly condemn those who use violence to silence reporters. Critical journalism is increasingly important in a world where disinformation and misinformation are weaponized by governments and the elite. We call on all stakeholders to ensure that justice is served for Chheng as a means to demonstrate that targeting journalists for their work will not be tolerated in Cambodia.

This statement was endorsed by:

1. Overseas Press Club of Cambodia (OPCC)
2. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
3. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
4. Cambodian Center for Independent media (CCIM)
5. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
6. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
7. Alliance of Independent Journalist (AJI) Indonesia
8. Gerakan Media Merdeka (Geramm)

9. Prachatai
10. National Union of Journalists of the Philippines
11. Association Journalists Timor-Leste (AJTL)
12. International Federation of Journalists (IFJs)
13. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
14. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)