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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

Quarterly Human Rights Update

July - September 2026

From July to September 2026, CCHR monitored 47 incidents of human rights violations and restrictions, including restrictions on freedom of expression, media freedom, political participation and association, land rights and the right to liberty. Freedom of expression remained particularly restricted, including through criminal proceedings related to social media posts, private communications, and journalistic activities. Opposition politicians and activists also continued to face legal action, while land and environmental rights concerns remained prominent.

The following is an overview of the violations documented by CCHR

Freedom of expression and Media Freedom:

CCHR recorded 25 incidents involving restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom. Criminal proceedings concerned social media posts, private phone calls and messages, photography, and journalistic activities. Online journalist Hem Vanna received a suspended six-month prison sentence for incitement and intercepting or recording a private conversation. Citizen journalist and social activist Chea Vuthy was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for incitement over a message posted in a private Messenger group. A deputy commune chief previously elected as a Candlelight Party candidate was arrested and charged with incitement and insult over a private phone conversation. Restrictions on private and public expression were particularly prominent this quarter.

Land and Environmental Rights :

TThere were 16 incidents related to land and environmental rights, including incitement and defamation charges against land advocates, pressure on journalists reporting illegal exploitation of natural resources, and forced evictions. In August, villagers of Preah Sihanoukville's Sangkat 1 were forcibly evicted and their homes demolished, reflecting broader insecurity faced by communities in land disputes where long-term occupation is contested by authorities. The Supreme Court also upheld human rights defender Koet Saray's conviction in connection with his land rights advocacy. He remains imprisoned, serving a four-year sentence, despite the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention finding his detention arbitrary.

Political Participation & Freedom of Association

Three incidents involved opposition politicians, local officials, and political activists. Nation Power Party (NPP) leaders Sok Hun and Sorn Reth were arrested and charged with forgery and use of a forged document less than one month after being appointed leadership positions in Phnom Penh's Stung Meanchey commune. NPP youth leader Chak Saray was arrested and detained on plotting and incitement charges after sharing Facebook posts, while the Appeal Court upheld Candlelight Party President Teav Vannol's defamation conviction.

Right to liberty:

CCHR recorded three incidents involving bail denials, alongside multiple arrests and custodial sentences affecting journalists, activists, and others exercising fundamental freedoms. In August, the Phnom Penh Appeal Court denied bail to citizen journalist and human rights defender Him Mom, while in September the Phnom Penh Capital Court sentenced her to two years' imprisonment for incitement and insult over Facebook posts.

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