

Joint Statement

Immediately release and drop charges against journalist Hem Vanna

Phnom Penh, 10 February 2026 - We, the undersigned civil society organizations and media organizations working to promote freedom of expression and media freedom, call for the release of journalist Hem Vanna, a publisher of HVNN TV Online in Banteay Meanchey province.

According to local human rights groups ADHOC and [LICADHO](#), Vanna was [arrested](#) by Poipet military police following his reporting on a suspected online scam compound. Vanna has been charged by the provincial court with *incitement to commit a felony* under Article 495 and *intercepting or recording private conversations* under Article 301 of the Criminal Code. He is currently being held in pre-trial detention in Banteay Meanchey prison.

On 30 January 2026, the journalist released a [video report](#) detailing an incident of violence perpetrated against a group of Chinese nationals in a suspected online scam compound in Poipet City. The report indicated that the compound was located approximately 100 meters behind the Poipet military police, seemingly indicating that the authorities should therefore have been aware of its existence.

According to [CamboJA](#), Vanna was summoned to the Poipet military police on 3 February, without being informed of the reason. He was later transferred to the Banteay Meanchey provincial military police, on allegations that he had published misleading information.

The arrest and charging of this journalist is yet another incident that demonstrates the government's tendency to silence members of the press through the misuse of criminal law. Rather than using mechanisms under the Press Law, such as requesting a correction or right of reply from the journalist, the response of the authorities was to arrest and indict him. This default response of criminalization undermines the basis of the charges against Hem Vanna, indicating that they may be motivated by ulterior interests.

Vanna is at least the fifth journalist who has been arrested in connection with their reporting since January 2025. The case highlights ongoing restrictions on independent journalism and due process, which are guaranteed under the Cambodian Constitution, specifically Article 41, as well as international human rights instruments to which Cambodia is a party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Cambodia ranks 161 out of 180 countries on the [Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom 2025 Index](#), categorizing it among 42 nations where the situation is "very serious."

In this case, the authorities could have sought clarification or requested a correction, if necessary, through lawful and proportionate means under the Press Law. Resorting to criminal charges, is excessive and disproportionate, and regrettably a response often opted for by the authorities against journalists and other civil society actors. We deplore Vanna's arbitrary arrest and detention, which undermines the safety of all journalists in Cambodia.

We therefore call on the relevant authorities to:

1. Immediately release Hem Vanna and drop all criminal charges against him;

2. Apply the Press Law in handling disputes related to journalistic work instead of the Criminal Code;
3. Respect and protect press freedom and ensure that journalists can carry out their professional duties without fear of harassment, intimidation, restriction or prosecution;

We stand in solidarity with journalists who are practicing their duty and the media community, and reiterate that a free and independent press is essential for transparency, accountability, and democracy.

This statement is endorsed by:

1. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
2. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
3. Communication and Media Promotion Organization (CMPO)
4. Cambodian Institution for Democracy (CID)
5. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
6. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense for Human Rights (LICADHO)
7. Empowering Youth For An Equitable Society (EYES)
8. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
9. Advocacy and Policy Institute (API)
10. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
11. Federation of Free Trade Union of Workers of the Kingdom of Cambodia (FTUWKC)
12. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
13. Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)
14. Gerakan Media Merdeka (Geramm) Malaysia
15. National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) Philippines
16. Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) Malaysia
17. Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia
18. Prachatai, Thailand
19. Freedom Forum, Nepal
20. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
21. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
22. Pacific Islands News Association (PINA)