JOINT STATEMENT

Investigate crimes against journalists and end impunity for perpetrators

Phnom Penh, 5 November 2026 — The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) must take immediate and concrete action to ensure effective, independent and transparent investigations into all crimes committed against journalists, media workers and human rights defenders (HRDs) in Cambodia, as we mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

In Cambodia, human rights violations and crimes against journalists remain a serious concern. There were 29 instances of human rights violations against journalists and media organizations between January and September 2026, according to the Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA). Of these cases, 19 involved legal threats, harassment, arbitrary interrogations and summonses, arrests, detentions, and imprisonment. Authorities remained the primary perpetrators of violations against journalists, yet accountability for these violations remained largely absent, allowing those responsible to continue acting with impunity. This pattern raises serious concerns about the abuse of power and the lack of accountability for violations committed against journalists, further undermining public trust in the justice system.

At the time of this statement, four journalists remain imprisoned[1] on charges including incitement, demoralization of the armed forces, and illegally encroaching on and clearing forest land. Two journalists were sentenced to 14 years each for allegedly supplying a foreign state with information prejudicial to national defense.

According to records compiled by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), at least 15 journalists have been killed in Cambodia since 1994. Twelve of these journalists were reporting on sensitive issues, including environmental and political matters that exposed the actions of powerful individuals, government officials and state institutions.

Cambodia ranked 151 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) 2026 World Press Freedom Index, placing it among countries where press freedoms are in a "very serious" situation. Targeting journalists, particularly those reporting on human rights, corruption, environmental issues and other matters of public interest, undermines press freedom and freedom of expression while restricting the public's right to access information. Such an environment makes it increasingly difficult for journalists to hold those in power accountable for their actions. When authorities fail to investigate crimes against journalists and bring perpetrators to justice, they perpetuate a culture of

[1] The four journalists remain in prison are:

1. Kim Den: Date of arrested since 17 December, 2023 to present in Steung Treng prison, charged of illegally encroaching on and clearing forest land (sentenced five years in prison)
2. Phorn Sopheap: date of arrested since 31 July 2025 to present in Siem Reap prison, charged of supplying a foreign state with information prejudicial to national defense (sentenced 14 years in prison)
3. Pheap Pheara: date of arrested since 31 July 2025 to present in Siem Reap prison, charged of supplying a foreign state with information prejudicial to national defense (sentenced 14 years in prison)
4. Luot Sophal: date of arrested since 13 February 2026 to present in Oddar Meanchey prison, charged of incitement and demoralization of the armed forces (sentenced 2 years in prison)

impunity and send a dangerous message that such violations can be committed without consequences.

On this International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, we call on the Royal Government of Cambodia to:

1. **End judicial harassment and arbitrary detention:** Stop using criminal charges, arbitrary arrests, detention and other forms of legal harassment to silence journalists for their legitimate reporting and exercise of freedom of expression. Release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained or imprisoned for exercising their fundamental rights.
2. **Guarantee a safe and enabling environment for journalism:** Take effective measures to prevent threats, intimidation, physical attacks, online harassment and other forms of retaliation against journalists, and ensure they can carry out their work without fear of reprisal.
3. **Ensure prompt, impartial investigations** of reported attacks, harassment and intimidation against journalists, human rights defenders and political actors, including unresolved complaints by journalists and allegations involving public officials.
   Ensure documented follow-up and accountability where violations are established. Build on existing assistance to journalists by introducing accessible protection procedures for journalists and human rights defenders, including risk assessment, urgent protective measures and follow-up on reported threats.
4. **Introduce safeguards:** Prevent strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and other abusive legal proceedings targeting human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society actors. Establish procedures enabling courts to dismiss abusive claims early, with appropriate remedies and consequences for their misuse.

This joint statement is endorsed by:

1. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
2. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
3. Cambodian Center for Independence Media (CCIM)
4. Communication and Media Promotion Organization (CMPO)
5. Cambodia Tourism Workers' Union Federation (CTWUF)
6. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
7. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
8. Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer employees of Naga World(LRSU)
9. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE)
10. Rural Women's Association for Agroecology (RWAA)
11. Building Community Voices (BCV)
12. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
13. Federation Union of Free and Independent (FUFI)