



Press Release: CamboJA publishes its first “Cambodian Journalism Situation Report 2020”

Phnom Penh, March 29, 2021 – *The Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA) today launches “Cambodian Journalism Situation Report 2020” - the first annual record of reported harassment cases against journalists, documented by CamboJA since its inception. The report highlights the frequency of harassment cases against journalists in 2020, who are often unfairly targeted for exercising their legal rights and freedoms in reporting stories.*

CamboJA recorded 35 cases of harassment against 72 journalists in 2020. The most common types of harassment against journalists were imprisonment and violence. At least 31 journalists were imprisoned (about 43% of cases). Violence also remains a risk of the job. 22 journalists were either attacked or threatened with violence while on duty.

The Criminal Code remains a powerful legal tool, which is too often used to intimidate and jail journalists. The report shows that most of the journalists who were arrested in 2020 were charged with incitement to commit felony or extortion under Articles 495 and 232 of the Criminal Code. As of December 2020, at least ten journalists remain in prison and pre-trial detention because of criminal charges, including Ros Sokhet and Sok Oudom, who were already convicted and charged with incitement to commit felony. Eight other journalists are still in pre-trial detention on extortion charges namely Eng Narong, Hout Davy, Khoem Phally, Hes Hin, Hak Sophanha, Oun Bros, Sim Sokda, and Chin Bunthoeun.

The ongoing imprisonment, detention and physical threats against journalists undermines the media’s role in a democratic society and strikes fear in those who cover stories or cases involving powerful officials.

Nop Vy, executive director of CamboJA, said: “This finding shows that journalists who dare to cover and report on the interests of military and powerful officials are still being persecuted through judiciary system that uses criminal law instead of press law and have been repeatedly beaten and subjected to violence. We call on the Royal Government to ensure the safety and security of all journalists so that they can exercise their rights to freely report without fear.”

The report also provides wide-ranging recommendations, highlighting some key areas of actions.

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