

STATEMENT:

CamboJA condemns Meanchey district authorities for violating journalists' rights

Phnom Penh, August 13, 2021 – The Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA) condemns Meanchey district authority for confiscating the identity card of its reporter and members, and calls on the authorities to immediately stop these violations.

At 9:10 a.m. on Friday, August 13, Meanchey district authorities confiscated the identity card of An Vichet, a journalist of CamboJA, and forced him as well as the other CamboJA's member to delete all of their pictures and videos of villagers protesting against joint police force of Meanchey district who were demolishing their houses located in Sansom Kosal 2 village, Boeung Tumpun I commune, Meanchey district, Phnom Penh.

An Vichet told CamboJA that the authorities even threatened him of arrest if he refused to remove all the images in front of them. Mr. An Vichet added that although he tried to prove that he was a journalist by presenting the press card, they still forced him to delete all the pictures from his camera and even confiscated his press card. The authorities still refused to return the press card to him, regardless of his explanation, and referred him to take the card at the district office.

Another journalist, Lors Lib Lib, who is an intern at Voice of America (VOA) and also a member of CamboJA, also had his mobile phone confiscated by Meanchey district authorities and was forced to delete the photos and videos he captured from the scene. He told CamboJA that many of his photos and videos of the authorities demolishing the fences of villagers' residence were deleted by the authorities. He said that after deleting the photos and videos, the authorities even asked for his motorbike key to search for any other cameras and phones left on his motorbike. During the search, the authorities took another phone he kept in his bag that was left on the motorbike and deleted all the pictures he took before returning the phone and motorbike key to him. He called such a forceful action a serious violation of press freedom and the rights of journalists and an indication of media restriction. He says the authorities are trying to hide the truth by prohibiting the media from broadcasting real stories of citizens to the wider public.

Nop Vy, the Executive Director of CamboJA, said: *“Confiscation of press cards and making threats to obstruct journalists from performing their duties are serious violations of press freedom, the rights of journalists, and the rights of citizens to access information. Authorities should be more open and try to understand more about duties and responsibilities of journalists, especially the professional and independent journalists, to enable them to perform their duties freely in accordance with the press law and the Constitution, which is our supreme law. The use of any forms of restrictions is a violation of the press law and the Constitution—that is unacceptable. I calls on the authorities to immediately stop the acts of harassment, intimidation and threats against journalists, and instead, cooperate and pay respect to the role performance of journalists in order to prove that the government truly pays attention to and respects the rights of citizens, especially the right to information.”*

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