

Murder Cases in Summary

1. September 29, 2020, Phnom Penh: Kouy Piseth, reporter for CBN TV online

Kouy Piseth, a reporter for CBN TV online, died in Phnom Penh in the early morning of September 29 in what police said was a traffic accident. Local authorities found the 23-year-old's body 40 meters from his motorbike on a concrete road in a residential area.

Kouy Piseth had left his workplace at 11:30 p.m on September 28, according to Chhay Socheat, the director general of CBN. Soon after finding his body at 3 a.m, and after some investigation, authorities concluded that Piseth's death was the result of a crash he had caused.

But Chak Sopheap, director of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), said the investigation had been insufficient. "In Piseth's case, we can see from local news and people at the scene that there are hints of an attack on him. If it is true, this is not merely a traffic accident, but it could be an attempt to attack him for being a journalist."

Piseth's mother Yort Tha said her husband checked their son's body and found a major injury to the back of his head. However, she said: "I don't know if I should file a complaint. I don't know who is behind it. Let it end here."

Source <https://bit.ly/3EAGWjJ>

2. February 04, 2019, Kratie: Sorn Sithy, reporter for the Battambang Post

Sorn Sithy, who was 18 years old at the time of his death and had been working as a reporter at the Battambang Post, was killed in the early hours of February 4 while on his way home from a wedding party with two other friends, according to a deputy provincial police chief.

Police officials said later they had clues about the murder of the journalist in Snuol district's Pi Thnou commune but were struggling to identify suspects because the victim's friends, who were the only witnesses, claimed they did not know what led to the attack. About a week after the killing, police arrested a 19-year-old suspect for the murder, alleging the young man had killed Sithy after the two argued at the wedding.

According to Sem Diya, the editor-in-chief of the Battambang Post, Sithy mostly reported news on social issues and hardly ever covered forest crimes, a topic linked to violence against journalists in the past.

Source <https://bit.ly/3pT5X5t>

3. October 12, 2014, Kratie: Taing Try, journalist for multiple outlets

Taing Try, a 49-year old journalist believed to have been investigating illegal logging in Kratie province, was shot dead there early on a Sunday morning. Within hours, police arrested three men -- a commune police chief, a military police officer and a Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) soldier -- for the murder, two of whom would be released months later.

Taing Try, 49, contributed to several local newspaper in Kratie and was shot in the forehead at about 1 a.m. on October 12 in the Khsoem commune of Snuol district after he and five other journalists went to investigate reports of illegal logging, according to Sok Sovann, president of the Khmer Journalists for Democracy Association, of which the slain reporter was a member. (Source : <https://bit.ly/2ZEUXh6>).

On December 12, 2014, the Kratie provincial court freed on bail two of the arrested men after the third told the court he carried out the murder on his own, according to the court's chief prosecutor.

It is unclear if the man who confessed, former soldier La Narong, was convicted of the murder.

Source: [Cambodia Daily](#)

4. February 01, 2014, Kampong Chhnang: Chan Suon, reporter for Meakea Kampuchea newspaper

Chan Suon was beaten to death the night of Saturday, February 1, outside his home in Kampong Chhnang. Initial reports indicate about 10 men believed to be local fishermen accosted Chan Suon as he was leaving his house, throwing stones and beating him with a bamboo pole until he lost consciousness and died. Meakea Kampuchea speculated the killing was a reprisal related to Chan's reporting on illegal fishing activities in the area, which had resulted in a police crackdown on local fishermen.

In September 2014, a suspect named Yorg Pealeng was arrested for his role in the murder and sent to provincial prison. He was one suspect among a group of six believed to have participated in the killing. In March 2015, the Kampong Chhnang Provincial Court sentenced Pealeng to a 13-year prison sentence.

The other five suspects were sentenced in absentia to 13 years imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of five million riel, about \$1,245. Civil society organizations and human rights activists applauded the sentence, hoping the other five suspects would also be brought to justice.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3bKrNQx>

5. September 11, 2012, Ratanakiri: Hang Serei Odom, reporter with the Virakchun Khmer Daily

The body of Hang Serei Odom, a reporter for the Khmer-language Virakchun Khmer Daily, was found in the trunk of his car at a cashew plantation in the O'Chum district of northeastern Ratanakiri province. His body was discovered two days after Odom was reported missing when he failed to return from an appointment.

The Cambodia Daily quoted local police chief Song Bunthanorm as saying Odom had been hit in the front and back of the head with an ax. The official said at least two people were involved in the murder but no suspects were immediately identified.

Odom reported frequently on illegal logging activities in Ratanakiri province, according to news reports citing the editor of his newspaper. In a September 6 report, the journalist had written that a provincial military police officer was involved in the illicit timber trade and had used military vehicles to smuggle illegally cut logs.

Despite an official ban on timber exports, illegal logging activities are rife in Cambodia, and news coverage of the trade has proven to be extremely dangerous for journalists.

A military captain and his wife were taken into custody the day after Odom's body was found, but after further investigation the provincial court [dropped all charges](#) against them. Since then, the murder has remained unsolved.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2ZBebnR>

6. January 16, 2009, Phnom Penh: Ban Song, journalist for Meato Phum newspaper

Ban Song, a 44-year-old reporter for the Meato Phum newspaper, was attacked in the evening by two men after being stopped on his motorbike on National Road 5 in Russei Keo district. Police said the attack was a robbery that had gone wrong. Ban Song reportedly tried to fight off his attackers but died after being stabbed 10 times.

The two assailants have yet to be discovered and the case remains unsolved.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3ExOROW>

7. July 11, 2008, Phnom Penh: Khem Sambo, reporter with Moneaseka Khmer newspaper

A journalist with the opposition-aligned, Khmer-language daily Moneaseka Khmer, Khem Sambo was shot twice while riding his motorcycle with his 21-year-old son, according to international and local news reports. His son was also shot and killed. The gunmen, who were on a motorcycle, reportedly sped away after the shooting.

Moneaseka Khmer was affiliated with the opposition Sam Rainsy Party, and Sambo was among the publication's most hard-hitting reporters. An analysis of Sambo's reporting in the weeks before his murder, as compiled by the Cambodian League for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights and reviewed by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), found a steady stream of critical reporting on Prime Minister Hun Sen and his ruling CPP.

Sambo's last reports, written under the pseudonyms Srey Ka or Den Sorin, touched on allegations of government corruption, internal rifts inside the ruling party and questions about the distribution of benefits from recent rapid Chinese investment in the country.

Moneaseka Khmer has since stopped publishing but at the time was one of only a handful of consistently critical publications in Cambodia.

Cambodian police officials did not identify a motive or suspects in the murder, which occurred during the run-up to general election that year. The case remains unsolved.

Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/khem-sambo/>

8. April 26, 2007, Kampong Speu: Pov Sam Ath, editor of Samleng Khmer Krom newspaper

The body of Pov Sam Ath, founder and editor of the newspaper Samleng Khmer Krom, was found in a suitcase in the Pich Nil valley in Kampong Speu province. An autopsy showed the 29-year-old journalist had been strangled with a cable, and Sam Ath's body was returned to his family the same evening it was found.

International press rights group Reporters Without Borders called on the government, and particularly the Minister of Interior Sar Kheng, to commit the necessary resources to an exhaustive investigation into the killing. Provincial police commissioner Keo Pisei said the journalist's body had been dumped in the valley three to four days before it was discovered.

Sam Ath's wife, her son and two other men were [arrested for the murder](#) about a week after the editor's body was found. It is unclear if they were convicted of the crime.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3EtBoHC>

9. October 18, 2003, Phnom Penh: Chou Chetharith, deputy editor of a partisan radio station

Chou Chetharith, a deputy editor of the royalist FUNCINPEC party's now-defunct Ta Prum radio station, was killed while on his way to work by a gunman riding on the back of a motorcycle.

According to witnesses interviewed by Agence France-Presse, Chetharith, 37, was shot in the head at point-blank range in broad daylight. Local sources told CPJ that Ta Prum was known for its critical reporting of Hun Sen. The station's director, Noranarith Anandayath, was an adviser at the time to FUNCINPEC party chief Prince Norodom Ranaridhh.

The day before the shooting, Hun Sen criticized Ta Prum in the English-language Cambodia Times, accusing the station of insulting his leadership. Chetharith's murder came ahead of scheduled political negotiations between FUNCINPEC and the former opposition Sam Rainsy Party.

No suspects for the slaying were ever found.

Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/chou-chetharith/> & <https://bit.ly/3EMfO1I>

10. October 14, 1997, Phnom Penh: Ou Sareoun, reporter for Samleng Reas Khmer newspaper

Ou Sareoun was a reporter for Samleng Reas Khmer. At the time of his death, the newspaper had been investigating extortion in Phnom Penh's Central Market, investigating the actions of market security guards. Sareoun was reportedly killed when some guards

dragged him into the street and shot him dead while he was distributing newspapers to market vendors.

Official reports said Sareoun was drunk at the time and had been killed in a dispute over a card game. The Khmer Journalists Association, however, maintains he was killed because of the newspaper's reporting.

Police arrested the guard who allegedly shot Sareoun, but the court filed no charges for the case and the man was later released. The murder remains officially unsolved.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2ZO0Dpf>

11. July 7, 1997, Phnom Penh: Michael Senior, freelancer

Senior, a television newscaster and English teacher, was assassinated while photographing soldiers looting in a public market two days after the start of the 1997 coup. Senior was accosted by the soldiers, Hun Sen loyalists, who shot him first in the knee. As he lay in the street pleading for mercy, he was shot again, executed in front of his Cambodian wife and brother-in-law.

The 23-year-old Canadian citizen was born in Cambodia, where he was orphaned as an infant during the Khmer Rouge years. In 1975, he was adopted by a family in Canada, where he was raised. He returned to Cambodia in 1995 and had earlier worked at the Cambodia Daily in Phnom Penh. His editors said that Senior's pictures, had they been recovered, would have been used in their coverage of the coup.

Senior's death was not investigated and none of the soldiers alleged to have murdered him were arrested.

Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/michael-senior/>

12. May 4, 1997, Sihanoukville: Pich Em, television station technician

Pich Em was a technician (and also an announcer according to some reports) at the KTV station in Sihanoukville and was killed during an attack on the broadcasting facility. Seven masked men reportedly using AK-47s and at least two B40 rocket-propelled grenade launchers stormed the building. Pich Em was shot twice in the stomach and died the following day in a hospital. Two other people were injured in the attack and most of the station's equipment was destroyed.

Days before the attack, the station had been asked by a senior provincial policeman to broadcast a political speech by a FUNCINPEC leader, a request the station refused.

No one has been arrested in connection with the murder of Pich Em or the assault on the station.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2ZO0Dpf>

13. March 30, 1997: Chet Duong Daravuth, reporter for Neak Prayuth newspaper

Chet Duong Daravuth was killed in a grenade attack on March 30, 1997, while covering a Khmer National Party (KNP) rally outside the National Assembly where opposition leader Sam Rainsy was speaking. Eyewitness reports suggest four grenades were thrown into the attending crowd. According to Licadho's 2004 human rights report, 16 people were killed and approximately 100 injured. Numerous witnesses reported that heavily armed soldiers working with Hun Sen's personal bodyguards, the notorious 'Brigade-70', allowed two people to throw the grenades.

Source <https://bit.ly/2ZO0Dpf>

According to US government sources, a report produced by an FBI team tentatively pinned responsibility for the blasts, and the subsequent interference, on Brigade-70. The report also indicated police had advance knowledge of the attack.

One suspect in the case was later killed in the factional fighting of 1997, but the perpetrators of the massacre remain officially unknown.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3bKrNQx>

14. May 18, 1996, Phnom Penh: Thun Bun Ly, writer and former editor of the opposition newspaper Odom K'tek Khmer

Thun Bun Ly was fatally shot while riding a motorcycle in central Phnom Penh. The journalist was appealing two convictions on charges of defamation and disinformation for criticizing the government in articles and cartoons. The paper was ordered closed by the government in May 1995.

Bun Ly's murder remains unsolved.

Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/thun-bun-ly/>

15. December 8, 1994, Kampong Cham: Chan Dara, reporter with the Koh Santepheap newspaper

Chan Dara, a Khmer-language newspaper reporter, was fatally shot in Kampong Cham. Dara had reportedly received threats from local officials who thought he was writing articles for Preap Norn Sar, an opposition newspaper that had reported on corruption in the region. Though a high-ranking army officer was arrested days after the murder, he was released in May 1995 after a provincial judge acquitted him for lack of evidence, according to news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA). During the trial, defendant Col. Sat Soeun, “admitted that he had been drinking with the slain journalists on the day of the murder, but testified that another man emerged from some bushes and fatally shot Chan Dara in the back” after they left the bar, according to DPA.

The defendant’s acquittal was later upheld in appeals court, leaving Dara’s murder officially unsolved.

Source <https://cpj.org/data/people/chan-dara/>

16. September 6, 1994, Phnom Penh: Nun Chan, editor-in-chief of Samleng Yuvachun Khmer newspaper

Nun Chan was shot and killed by two unidentified gunmen in central Phnom Penh. He had previously received several official warnings and anonymous death threats for his coverage of government corruption earlier in the year.

Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/nun-chan/>

Police soon arrested two suspects in connection with the murder, but the investigating judge eventually stated there was no evidence against the two persons and that a confession from one of them had been coerced. The case was returned to the investigating judge for further investigation.

The two suspects have never been tried, and it is still unknown who ordered the killing.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3bKrNQx>

17. June 11, 1994: Phnom Penh: Tou Chhom Mongkol, editor-in-chief of Khmer-language biweekly Antarakum

Tou Chhom Mongkol died one day after police found him lying unconscious on a Phnom Penh thoroughfare. Prior to Mongkol's death, Antarakum had published a number of articles charging government and military officials with corruption, and its offices had been the target of a March grenade attack. (Source: <https://cpj.org/data/people/tou-chhom-mongkol/>)

Police initially claimed he was the victim of a traffic incident, stating the cause of death as a collision with a bicycle taxi. However, a more comprehensive post-mortem investigation found this was not possible, as his body had no other injuries and his motorcycle was undamaged.

It is unclear if Mongkol's death was investigated further.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3bKrNQx>