

Phnom Penh, 14 February 2023

Open Letter To

Her Excellency Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women's Affairs

His Excellency Khieu Kanharith, Minister of Information

Her Excellency Phoeurng Sackona, Minister of Culture and Fine Arts

His Excellency Chea Vandeth, Minister of Post and Telecommunication

Subject: Request to take immediate action against Mr. Pheng Vannak, Director of [Pheng Vannak News](#), for using misogynistic language and verbal harassment against a woman journalist.

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, who work to promote women's rights and gender equality in Cambodia, acknowledge the will and efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia in promoting women's rights and gender equality in various fields, especially in fulfilling the obligations as a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as well as through the implementation of national laws and policies.

According to a 2021 report by the Ministry of Information, only 470 out of 5,000 journalists in Cambodia were women, equivalent to just 9.4 percent. The figure showed that women journalists are underrepresented in the media sector, and it should note that they face numerous challenges, including gender-based discrimination, threat, and harassment¹. Some have reported that such a working environment affects their physical and mental health, affects their ability to perform their journalistic profession, and may discourage other women from entering the media profession.

Given these challenges, we are deeply disturbed that Mr. Pheng Vannak has recently posted misogynistic comments on his personal Facebook page (Vannak Pheng) that insulted and harassed a woman journalist. Such a statement is directly quoted, "As a pretty young girl, but with a wild character... With such a cheap character, whoever marries you, would be finished...."

We noted Mr. Pheng Vannak's misogynistic statements could severely affect the Royal Government of Cambodia's efforts to promote gender equality, empower women, and achieve Goal 5 of the sustainable development goal by 2030, including eliminating gender-based discriminatory mindsets. Further, the statements made by Mr. Pheng Vannak are a severe violation of professional ethics in journalism and a breach of the Media Code of Conduct, jointly created by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Information in July 2017 for Reporting on Violence Against Women, including the establishment of a working group to address violations of this Code of Conduct. These statements have seriously affected the dignity of individuals and degraded women and society. They are contrary to Article 31 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia "...Khmer citizens shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights and freedom ... the exercise of personal rights and freedom by any individual shall not adversely affect the rights and freedom of others..."

¹ Khmertimes: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50769694/support-for-female-journalists-sought/>
Phnom Penh Post: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/female-journos-share-woes-seek-improvements>

We request Your Excellencies the Ministers take firm legal action against Mr. Pheng Vannak to provide justice to the woman who is being abused and persecuted and to set a good example in society, which includes the following:

1. The Working Group on Reporting Violence Against Women of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Information take actions against Mr. Pheng Vannak's activities to ensure that the practice is in line with the Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Violence Against Women and to prevent any content embedding insulting language and harassment against women and individuals of all genders from happening again.
2. Command Mr. Pheng Vannak to acknowledge his mistakes, correct his insulting words, and publicly apologize to the woman journalist and the general public for his immoral acts.
3. Command Mr. Pheng Vannak to attend a training course on gender-sensitive reporting in the field of journalism under the responsibility of the working group to monitor and address violations of the Media Code of Conduct for Reporting on Violence Against Women.

For further information, please contact:

Eng Chandy, Executive Director of Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), 095 797 909
Bunn Rachana, Executive Director of Klahaan Organization, 089 476 146
Chim Channeang, General Secretary of The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW), 012 668 853
Sdeung Phearong, Executive Director of Banteay Srei, 077514474

Endorsed by:

1. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)
2. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
3. Klahaan Organization (Klahaan)
4. Banteay Srei (BS)
5. Building Voices of Community (BCV)
6. Women Peace Makers (WPM)
7. Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (Comfrel)
8. Wellbeing Advancement
9. Association to Support Vulnerable Women (ASVW)
10. Cambodia Labor Confederation (CLC)
11. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
12. Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)
13. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
14. ActionAid Cambodia (AAC)
15. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
16. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
17. Women Media's Centre (WMC)
18. Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld (LRSU)
19. Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)
20. Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)
21. Cambodian Journalists Alliance (CamboJA)
22. Gender and Development Network (GADnet)
23. Lady Saving Group (LSG)

24. Cambodian Health and Education for Community (CHEC)
25. Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
26. The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability Cambodia (ANSA Cambodia)
27. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
28. Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW)
29. Youth Resources Development Program (YRDP)
30. Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC)
31. Transparency International Cambodia (TIC)
32. Urban Poor Women Development (UPWD)
33. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
34. Social Action for Community Development (SACD)
35. Trailblazer Cambodia Organization
36. សហគមន៍175គ្រួសារ
37. ស.គ 197គ្រួសារសហគមន៍ភូមិព្រៃលាន
38. Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)