



សមាគមសម្ព័ន្ធអ្នកសារព័ត៌មានកម្ពុជា  
*Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association*

# CAMBODIAN JOURNALISM SITUATION REPORT 2022

An annual record of reported harassment cases  
against journalists



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## Executive summary

CamboJA's 2022 monitoring report on reported harassment against journalists once again offers cause for deep concern. While the reported cases dropped compared to last year, flickers of optimism in those figures were snuffed out by the closure of one of Cambodia's most prominent independent media outlets at the start of 2023.

We urge the government to reverse its decision to close Voice of Democracy (VOD), and believe its closure is a worrying sign of how the ruling party will seek to control information around the upcoming national elections and beyond.

Journalists in Cambodia continue to work despite the fear of unemployment, physical violence and imprisonment. We are proud to count many of our members among them.

CamboJA recorded 35 cases of harassment — including physical attacks, threats of violence, discrimination, arrest, imprisonment, and other legal actions — against 54 journalists in 2022, based on news reports, social media posts, court documents and interviews.

That total case count marks a 28% decrease from reported cases last year, when CamboJA documented 49 cases of harassment against 96 journalists. While some stakeholders may see this year's report as a sign of progress, we are wary of drawing any conclusions. Impunity continues to rein for those who threaten or attack journalists — and seven journalists remained in prison and pre-trial detention as of December 2022.

CamboJA was unable to document a single example of the courts prosecuting officials and other individuals who harassed members of the media. Furthermore, four media licenses were revoked over accusations of publishing information that violated journalistic professional ethics and corporate contracts.

In late December, Prime Minister Hun Sen urged caution in the arrest of a journalist for the pro-government Bayon TV network, saying cases that should be settled in civil courts were being turned into criminal cases, without sufficient evidence.

However, that message has been too rare, and independent journalists facing prosecution receive no such protection. CamboJA's research shows that all journalists who were arrested in 2022 were charged with incitement to commit a crime, inciting people to protest, and inciting to discrimination and public defamation.

These criminal charges are often tools of intimidation, and even legitimate transgressions should almost always be dealt with through the Press Law, which is rarely used in such cases. This needs to change.

The ongoing imprisonment, detention and physical threats against journalists continue to undermine the media's role in a democratic society and strike fear in those who cover stories or cases involving powerful officials.

Nobody should spend months in prison for doing journalism. And our colleagues should not need to sacrifice their mental and physical health to keep Cambodians informed about their country.

## I. Introduction

Though there has been an increase in the number of media outlets in Cambodia, especially online media outlets and media associations, freedom of the press remains a challenge.

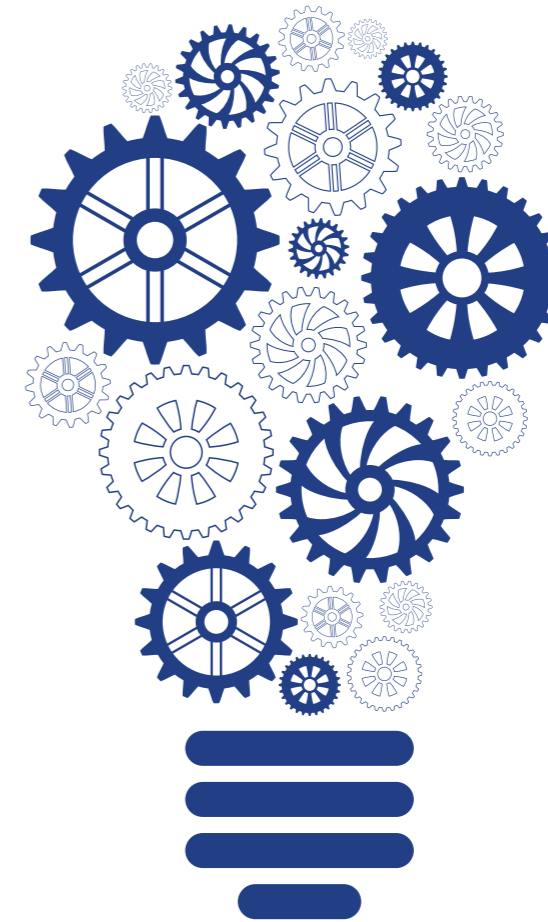
According to a Ministry of Information report<sup>1</sup>, by the end of 2022 there were a total of 2,171 outlets registered, including 27 broadcast TV stations, 212 stations with cable TV services, 220 FM radio stations, 1 national radio broadcaster via AM frequencies, 466 newspapers, 193 magazines, 878 websites, 26 foreign news agencies with local offices and 51 media associations.

While these figures are often cited by the government as evidence of media freedom, they mask the crackdown on media freedom since 2017. The daily drumbeat of smaller-scale harassment — along with high profile cases of arrest or imprisonment — has made self-censorship the unfortunate status quo for many outlets and individual journalists.

Discrimination, intimidation, imprisonment, false accusations, harassment, and violent attacks are regularly committed against journalists. Cambodia's ranking on the World Press Freedom Index dropped from 132 in 2017 to 142 out of 180 countries in 2022. It remained about the same compared to its spot at 144 last year.

On the other hand, the ethics and standards practiced by Cambodia's press corps, especially online media reporters, remain inconsistent, leading to unprofessional conduct and unethical journalism that sometimes leads to justified legal claims and accusations of impropriety. Still, criminal charges are often applied where civil charges are appropriate.

This report focuses on those cases in which available evidence suggests that journalists came under attack — physical, verbal legal, administrative or otherwise — for exercising their legal rights and freedoms under both Cambodia's constitution and international law.



## II. Methodology

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Information report provided by H.E Meas Sophorn via telegram, January 19, 2023,

## 1. Method & Data Collection

This report employed a qualitative method. Data on harassment cases against journalists was compiled using reported cases in various media outlets, social media posts and public announcements from courts.

Cases were verified through phone calls, desk review, monitoring the trial process and interviews with lawyers, journalists and their family members. In cases involving journalists accused of committing crimes, CamboJA counted them as harassment if one or more of the journalists involved denied the accusations or charges. In cases involving journalists accused of extortion, CamboJA didn't count them as harassment due to our limited capacity to investigate the truth.

### Some key terms used in this report are defined as follows

- Journalists includes media workers such as reporters, freelancers, photojournalists, citizen journalists, support staff and fixers, and others with press cards from the Ministry of Information or ID cards from their own outlets. It does not include social media users without any of these professional credentials.
- Harassment cases cover all types of attacks, from violence to threats, arrest, jailing, legal actions, and revoked licenses.
- Legal action means legal or judicial actions against journalists, including complaints and summons for questioning.
- Revoked license means the Ministry of Information has officially withdrew the license of a specific media outlet.
- Violence covers physical violence and threats of physical violence.
- Intimidation covers cases in which authorities have threatened arrest, legal action or other measures in an attempt to prevent information from being published, or to block journalists from accessing information.
- Discrimination covers cases in which officials or organizations have singled out independent media outlets for different treatment or barred access to information to journalists seen as critical of the government.
- Detention means detained for questioning for few hours or overnight but not charged and imprisoned.
- Imprisonment means placed in jailed for pre-trial detention on specific charged or imprisoned after conviction.

## 2. Scope and limitations

This report has some limitations and gaps. It does not necessarily include all harassment cases against journalists in 2022, but only reported cases from January-December 2022 that were identified during CamboJA's research. It is likely that many additional cases went unreported, as journalists often face harassment in the provinces, where incidents are more likely to remain hidden due to limited resources for monitoring and legal assistance.

## III. Key Findings

### 1. Year-on-year trends in harassment of journalists

Journalists continued to face harassment while on duty in 2022, often while reporting on politics, land disputes and public protests.

CamboJA recorded 35 cases of harassment against 55 journalists — including physical attacks, threats of violence, discrimination, arrest, imprisonment, and other legal actions. More than 30 of those journalists involved (over 54% of the total) were subjected to violence, threats of violence, intimidation and imprisonment.

CamboJA also recorded an additional three cases against eight journalists involving allegations of extortion. Five of those journalists were arrested and imprisoned (three in Preah Vihear and two in Kampot province).

That total case count marks a 28% decrease from reported cases last year, when CamboJA documented 49 cases of harassment against 96 journalists, but remains on the same level as in 2020, the first year that CamboJA began tracking harassment against journalists.

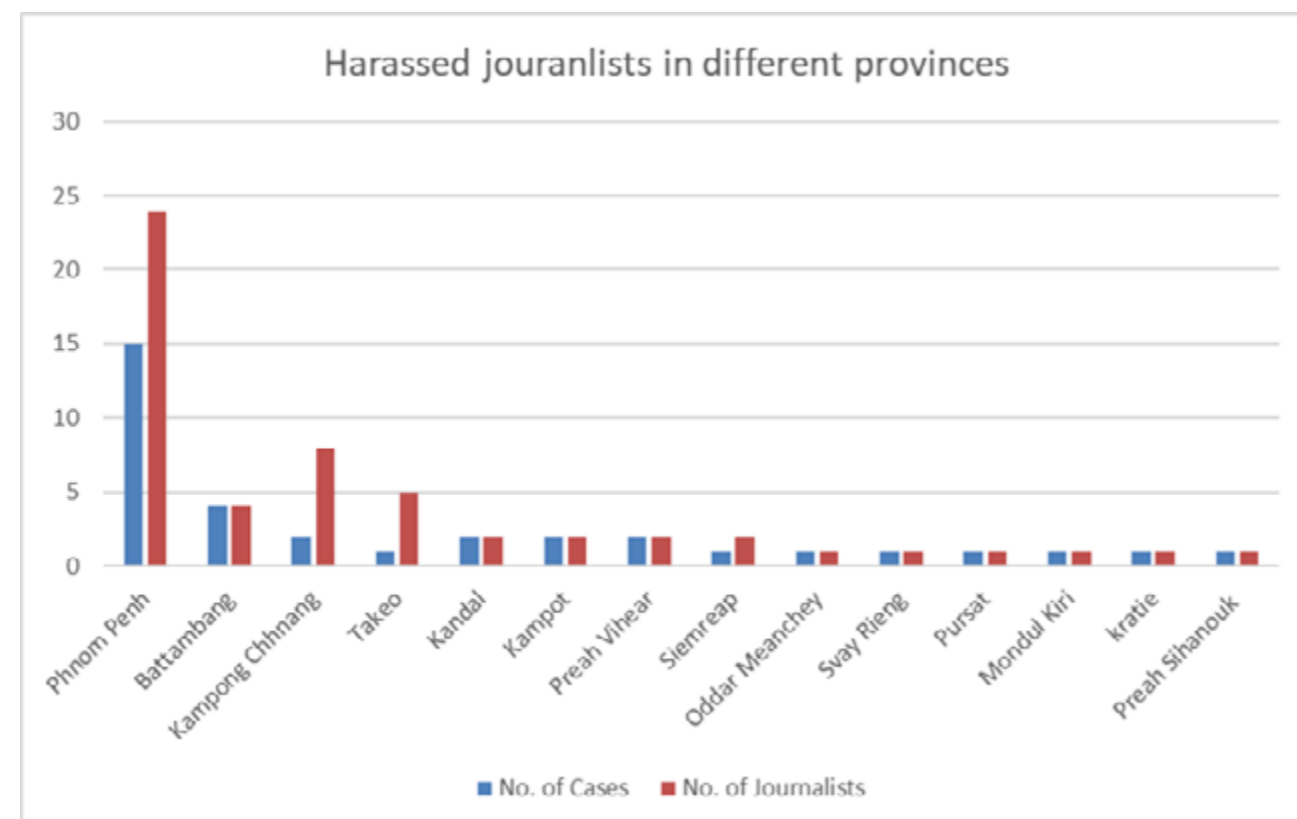
**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF HARASSMENT CASES RECORDED IN 2020, 2021 AND 2022**

Year	No. of cases	No. of journalists	No. of women journalists
2020	35	72	3
2021	49	96	4
2022	35	54	8

## 2. Location of harassment cases

Cases of harassment were widespread, with incidents recorded in 14 of the 25 provinces throughout Cambodia.

**FIGURE 1: JOURNALISTS WERE HARASSED IN 14 DIFFERENT PROVINCES**



Among those 14 provinces, the majority of cases were in the capital city Phnom Penh, along with the provinces of Battambang, Kampong Chhnang and Takeo. Those five locations accounted for over 75% of harassed journalists (41 out of 54 total). Most cases in these four provinces involved journalists being harassed for reporting on illegal logging, land rights and worker rights protests.

Most journalists in these four provinces faced three types of harassment: violence, legal action, and arrest. In Phnom Penh, where 24 journalists were harassed, most of the cases were related to reporting and commentary on NagaWorld rallies, land disputes, and commune elections. Most of the journalists involved faced threats and revoked media licenses.

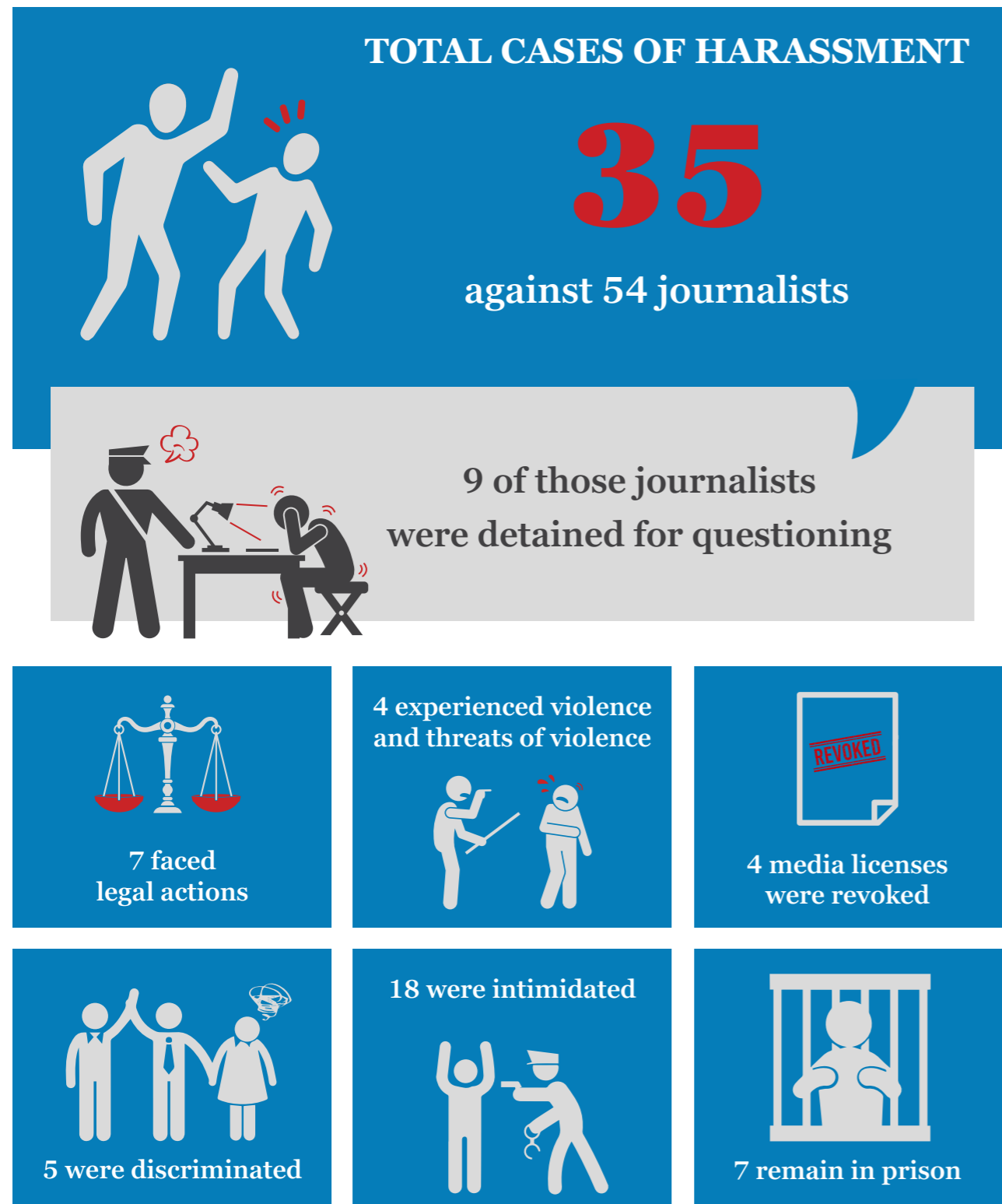
## 3. Types of harassment

The following table breaks down the 35 reported harassment cases into five major types: legal action, revoked license, intimidation, discrimination, violence (or threats of violence), detained for questioning and imprisonment.

**TABLE 2: TYPES OF HARASSMENT**

Type of harassment	No. of cases	No. of journalists
Legal action	7	7
Revoke license	2	4
Violence or threats of violence	4	4
Intimidation	13	18
Discrimination	2	5
Detained for questioning	3	9
Imprisonment	4	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>54</b>

## RECORDED CASES OF HARASSMENT 2022



The most frequent incident type was intimidation, which accounted for 13 cases involving 18 journalists, or about 33% of the total recorded incidents of harassment against journalists in 2022 (see the full list of intimidation cases below). The second largest sub-group was legal action, which accounted for 7 cases involving 7 journalists (see the list of legal action below).

### 3.1. Legal action

Police and powerful businessmen at times used the courts as a tool to silence the media. Seven journalists from seven different online media outlets were subject to often dubious legal accusations in 2022, summoned and questioned by police and judicial authorities in five different provinces: Battambang, Oddar Meanchey, Kampot, Preah Vihear, and Mondulkiri.

#### LIST OF LEGAL ACTION CASES

Date of incident	No. of Journalists	Summary of the cases
13-Oct-22	1	<p>Yuos Sareoun, a reporter for the Life and Sports News, was summoned by the Kampot provincial police after publishing an article criticizing the deputy provincial police chief for allegedly inappropriate words with a suspect's family.</p> <p>Yean Thun, deputy district police chief in Terk Chuk district, accused Yuos Sareoun of publishing fake news and public defamation.</p> <p>However, Yuos Sareoun said that he published accurate news with professionalism. He did not show up at the provincial police office and said the summons should be sent to the institution, not the individual. (See annex 6)</p>
08-Sep-22	1	<p>Sen Vireak, a reporter for SBN Post News in Battambang province, was summoned by the provincial court in August after local authorities accused him of incitement for live streaming from a land dispute.</p> <p>He told CamboJA that he is very concerned about this allegation against him, noting that he went to cover information professionally and with the invitation of the community members, with no intention of inciting or leading any rebellion. (See annex 8)</p>
16-Jun-22	1	<p>Bun Rith, 47, an owner of Rithy Dav Dek News, was summoned by Mondulkiri provincial police, accused of defaming of local authorities through social media.</p> <p>The summons was made after he published traffic accident news dated 16 June 2022 alleging the local authority intentionally ignored the case after taking a bribe. Bun Rith admitted his mistake and changed the article after meeting with local authorities. (See annex 19).</p>

08-Jun-22	1	<p>A Preah Vihear journalist said he is facing arrest after filming a bulldozer clearing state land. The provincial court said the warrant was issued after the man failed to appear for questioning four times.</p> <p>Try Sophal, a journalist for online news outlet “Everyday,” said the case dated back to late 2021, when he reported on a bulldozer clearing state land in Kulen district’s Srayong commune.</p> <p>He and other journalists then received complaints of stealing and threatening, he said.</p> <p>“But I [only] saw the crime and I filmed and reported. Why did they accuse me of that?” Sophal said.</p> <p>Sophal said he was also beaten at the time but that the provincial court had released the assailants. He complained to the Anti-Corruption Unit about the court. (See annex 20).</p>
22-Mar-22	1	<p>Lim Phally, 43, a reporter for Los Seng News, was charged and sent to court after a livestream report from January 16 in which he alleged a Battambang timber factory had illegally processing luxury wood.</p> <p>“We saw him actively transporting timber in and out of Battambang every day. When our reporters went to cover it, he complained against us, accusing us of defamation and disseminating [false] information — even though I have documents, videos, and photos of him carrying wood.” Phally said.</p> <p>Battambang provincial forestry department director Chhim Vachira said the factory was licensed and all the wood transported to the factory had a valid permit. “Without being legal, they would not be able to run. So, in my opinion, if it was not legal, it would not be possible to be open in the center of the city.” Vachira said. (See annex 28)</p>
11-Mar-22	1	<p>Chheoun Bunchhi, 52, a reporter of Kampuchea Daily news, was summoned by the provincial court of Oddar Meanchey province for allegedly publishing fake news on social media on 25 July 2021.</p> <p>The summons was made after he published news on the land dispute between the community and the district Forestry Administration. During the hearing on January 31, the provincial court of Oddar Meanchey ordered Chheoun Bunchhi to pay four million riels, or about 1,000 USD, to the plaintiff. Bunchhi appealed the case. (See annex 31)</p>

20-Jan-22	1	<p>Los Seng, the publisher of Los Seng News, was placed under court supervision for six months over a live video report by two staff members in Kampot province.</p> <p>The two reporters were arrested for covering a protest outside the Kampot provincial hall against the arrests of residents involved in a land dispute. Information Minister Khieu Kanharith also spoke in November against the arrests, saying, “If [journalists] take pictures in front of the provincial hall, why not let them take pictures?”</p> <p>“Arresting them is wrong, it is arbitrary. So, our administration is also abusive,” he added. (See annex 34)</p>
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In six cases, journalists were charged and convicted with incitement to commit felonies and defamation for covering land disputes. Most journalists were charged and convicted for reporting and livestreaming from protests involving people angry with local authorities, who didn’t want the issue to receive public attention. In some cases, CamboJA observed that the journalists failed to get a response from individuals or entities on the other side of that dispute (however that in no way justifies criminal charges).

### CASE STUDY: Try Sophal Faces Arrest Warrant After Filming Land Clearing



Excavators are clearing state forest land in Siem Reap Kulen district. Photo supplied

Try Sophal, a 31-year-old journalist for online news outlet “Everyday,” says he is facing arrest after filming a bulldozer clearing state land. The court says the warrant was issued after the man failed to appear for questioning four times.

Sophal said the case dates back to late last year, when he reported on a bulldozer clearing state land in Kulen district’s Srayong commune.<sup>2</sup>

He and other journalists then received complaints of stealing and threatening, he said.

“I was accused of stealing, robbing. That would mean that at that time I went to remove the key or confiscate something from the perpetrator that accused me. But I [only] saw the crime and I filmed and reported. Why did they accuse me of that?” Sophal said.

<sup>2</sup> Khuon Narim, “Journalists Facing Extortion Charges,” CamboJA News, 27 December 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Xz2uqy>

Sophal said he was also beaten at the time but that the provincial court released the assailants.

He complained to the Anti-Corruption Unit about the court. Sophal's lawyer Morn Keo Sivin said his client was merely reporting the news, and he would also submit a letter to the Justice Ministry to intervene in the case.

Deputy prosecutor and provincial court spokesman Vuth Savy, however, said the arrest warrant was a legal process resulting from the journalist failing to respond to previous summonses.

"I am not the one who filed the lawsuit against him.

I received the complaint," he said. "When a prosecutor receives a complaint from another party, whether the person is right or wrong, both parties must come into the light and face the prosecution to find out what is wrong. If the individual does not commit the crime as the other party [alleged], then we go home."

The other journalists in the case had already been questioned and sent home, Savy added. "He alone ... did not come to answer." (See annex 20)

In August, Sophal was placed under judicial supervision on charges of extortion. Under his bail conditions, along with the check-ins, he was required to not change his address and appear when summoned by the court.

A judge ordered a warrant for Sophal's arrest in October after he failed to show up for one of those court-mandated monthly check-ins, and military police are still searching for him.

"I am now worried," Sophal said. "It seems like suppression, they don't want me to carry out reporting in this [Preah Vihear] province."

Sophal told CamboJA, when reached by phone from hiding, that he was surprised to see the court warrant because he never saw any summons from the court.

"I have carried out my journalistic profession, I did not commit [extortion] what I have been accused of," Sophal said.



*Mr. Try Sophal films the provincial forestry administration team and military police confiscating illegal timber in Choam Ksant, Preah Vihear province. Photo supplied.*

### 3.2. Revoked License

The Information Ministry revoked at least 4 media licenses — three from news organizations that were accused of publishing information that violated journalistic ethics and corporate contracts, and another one accused of immoral acts while live streaming on Facebook. The Information Ministry on 18 July 2022, has three of these news organizations to recontinue their broadcasts.


#### **CASE STUDY: Three online media outlets have had their licenses revoked**

Three media outlets have had their license canceled. Bayong Times, Khmer Cover TV (KCTV), and Cambodia Today shut down after the ministry said in a statement they had "published information that violated journalistic professional ethics and corporate contracts."

But Touch Yuthea, Editor-in-Chief of Cambodiatoday, told CamboJA that his publication has done nothing wrong and said the government was putting pressure on independent news sources.

"Cambodia Today is aimed at providing its reader with reliable sources of information as well as what is really going on in the society," he said.





**ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា**  
**ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ**

ថ្ងៃចេញផ្សាយ: ថ្ងៃចន្ទ ១១ ខែ វិច្ឆិកា ឆ្នាំ ២០២២ ព.ស. ២៥៦៥  
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**ក្រសួងព័ត៌មាន**  
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**ជម្រាបជូន**

**ឯកឧត្តម លោកជំទាវ លោក លោកស្រី ប្រធានមន្ទីរព័ត៌មានទាំង២៥ រាជធានី-ខេត្ត**


**កង្វះខាត:** មិនបន្តអាជ្ញាប័ណ្ណឱ្យអង្គការសារព័ត៌មានចំនួន ៣ រួមមាន អង្គការសារព័ត៌មាន Bayongtimes (www.bayongtimes.com) អង្គការសារព័ត៌មាន KCTV (www.khmercovertv.com) និងអង្គការសារព័ត៌មានកម្ពុជាថ្ងៃ (www.cambodiatoday.news) ។

**ហេតុ:** - របាយការណ៍លេខ១៥៣/២២ លដ ចុះថ្ងៃទី១៦ ខែកុម្ភៈ ឆ្នាំ២០២២ របស់លេខាធិការដ្ឋាននៃគណៈកម្មាធិការនីតិកម្មនៃក្រសួងព័ត៌មាន ។  
- ចំណាត់ការដ៏ខ្ពង់ខ្ពស់របស់ ឯកឧត្តមរដ្ឋមន្ត្រី ចុះថ្ងៃទី១ ខែមីនា ឆ្នាំ២០២២ ។

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"We always stick to professionalism and facts and I think we did nothing wrong or violate the journalistic professional ethics since we only report the truth," he added.

Yuthea said that despite constant threats, he continues to do his job because "if we journalists do not dare to report the facts then who can?"

In early February, Cambodia Today published an investigative story about alleged corruption within the Ministry of Labor, which the editor thinks could be the reason behind its revoked license.

"I published an article about the corrupt bidding process at the Ministry of Labor, which wastes millions of dollars of the national budget. Then the officials of the Ministry of Information asked me to take down the article, but I refused," he said.

Phos Sovann, Ministry of Information spokesman, told CamboJA that the three media outlets had published misinformation by accusing civil servants of committing corruption without any evidence. He said this was in violation of Article 10 of the Press Law, which grants individuals the right to demand a retraction or sue over alleged "defamation, libel or humiliation."

"The Ministry asked them to revise their articles because they violated journalistic ethics by publishing misinformation, but they refused. Therefore, it leaves us no choice but to make this decision," he said.

Nop Vy, the Executive Director of the Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA), said the termination of the three media licenses was intimidation and aimed at preventing journalists from doing their jobs.

"If they are under threat or their licenses can be withdrawn after they publish sensitive stories, then they won't do their job of promoting social accountability, good governance, and reducing corruption," he said.

### 3.3. Violence

Four journalists were physically attacked for their works. Most of the physical attacks occurred when journalists were covering illegal timber trading and cock fighting.

## LIST OF VIOLENCE CASES

Date of incident	No. of Journalists	Summary of the cases
21-Aug-22	1	<p>Sou Senghak, 60, a journalist at Samarakot News in Preah Vihear province, was allegedly beaten up by an army commander on August 20 after he witnessed what he suspected to be the illegal transportation of timber.</p> <p>Senghak suspected the wood had been obtained illegally and considered stopping the truck to investigate. However, before he had the chance to do so, he says the Battalion's commander exited the vehicle, approached Senghak, who was standing with his wife, and hit them both, causing Senghak's nose to bleed. (See annex 10)</p>
9-Aug-22	1	<p>Sun Kvancha, a reporter for Penh Chet Media, was threatened and his car was shot by an anonymous person with a gun after he published an article on illegal cockfighting. The incident happened on the night of 8 August 2022 in Kro Vanh district, Pursat province.</p> <p>In the article, it was alleged that Tang Sarith, the district police inspector, ignored the illegal cockfighting and did not dare to crack down, suggesting he might be involved with the illegal business. (See annex 12)</p>
18-Jul-22	1	<p>A local journalist in Kratie province was beaten by a group of cross-border timber traders on 18 July 2022 in Snoul district, Kratie province on the Vietnam border.</p> <p>The victim was San Sim (call Ra), a 52-year-old reporter for Somraek Satrey Khmer in Snoul district, who told GN times that while he was sitting and eating potatoes at a villager's house, suddenly three people armed with sticks attacked him. He identified one of the perpetrators as Khyong, who he said was an active timber merchant who transports wood into Vietnam. According to the victim, the attack was in retaliation to his work of trying to get photos of merchants and report about their illegal trade. (See annex 14)</p>
26-Mar-22	1	<p>Meas Sora, a reporter of Measora news website, was threatened with violence while he was streaming the illegal cockfighting in Steung Meanchey district, Phnom Penh.</p> <p>The owner of the cockfighting operation allegedly hit Meas Sora's car, broke the mirror and tried to confiscate journalist's phone to prevent taking any photos at the illegal cockfighting arena site. (See annex 27)</p>

In all four cases of violence, the perpetrators were not brought to justice despite being identified and even sued by the journalists. Suspected perpetrators included local authorities — such as military police, timber traders, businessmen and other civilians engaged in illegal activities.

## CASE STUDY: Sou Senghak assaulted by military commander



*A meeting to resolve the issue between Lieutenant Colonel Yoeung Sae and Sou Senghak, which was attended by other officers and Samarakot journalists, was held on August 22, 2022. Photo supplied*

Sou Senghak, 60, a journalist at Samarakot News in Preah Vihear province says he was beaten up by an Army commander after he accidentally witnessed what he suspected to be the illegal transportation of timber.

He told CamboJA he was attending a friend's party opposite the Battalion 394 barracks in Choam Ksan district on Sunday night when he happened to see a tractor transporting about 2 cubic meters of wood.

Lieutenant Colonel Yoeung Se, the battalion's commander, was on the tractor accompanied by a timber broker, according to Senghak.

Senghak said he was about to call out to the tractor to stop, so that he could investigate what was going on, but before he could do so the commander jumped off the tractor and hit him, as well as his wife who'd gone with him to the party.

"They stopped, (Lieutenant Colonel) Se jumped off and beat me and my wife," Senghak said, adding that his nose was bleeding.

Senghak said he immediately filed a complaint with the gendarmerie, but the commander phoned him asking to settle the matter out of court.

"They called me to mediate, but I found it very difficult to accept because he hit me so hard," he said.

He told CamboJA that he thinks there has been wood stored at that barracks for some time, though it's unclear who it belongs to.

"I do not know who owns the timber. We just know there is wood there, but we cannot enter this place," he said.

Illegal logging and timber transportation is rife in the area, he said, adding that most of it is from the Preah Roka forest and no action has been taken to prevent the criminal activity.

Si Vuthea, editor-in-chief of Samarakot News, said his reporter had called the military police in Choam Ksan District shortly after the incident, at around 10 PM on Sunday night, and a military police officer told him to file a complaint.

However, on Monday evening, August 22, both parties agreed to end the lawsuit, he said. The newspaper also agreed to remove an article about the incident.

Vuthea said the commander had explained his behavior by saying he had mistaken Senghak for another journalist accused of extortion, which is why he attacked him.

“He (Mr. Se) heard that a journalist had extorted money from a wild boar seller, and he thought that it was Mr. Senghak. So when he saw Mr. Senghak, he beat him,” Vuthea said.

Contacted for comment, Lieutenant Colonel Se declined to comment.

Him Khortieth, research and advocacy manager at CamboJA, said that journalists should not be victims of violence.

“The assault of journalists reporting on issues in the public interest is a gross violation of press freedom. All journalists must be able to carry out their work safely and securely. I condemn this violence against Mr. Sou Senghak and call on authorities to bring the perpetrator to justice,” he said. (See annex 10)

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said: “The use of violence against journalists is an infringement on press freedom. The IFJ condemns the assault against Sou Senghak and urges authorities to take immediate action to hold the commander involved responsible.”

### 3.4. Intimidation

Eighteen journalists, including six females, faced intimidation while doing their work. Five journalists were intimidated and threatened with arrest while they were reporting on Naga World labor strike activities in Phnom Penh. Three journalists were intimidated and prevented and blocked from accessing information on commune election. In some cases, journalists faced explicit threats of legal action, while in other cases journalists were publicly shamed or ridiculed for doing their jobs.

#### LIST OF INTIMIDATION CASES:

Date of incident	No. of Journalists	Summary of the cases
23-Dec-22	1	<p>Digital media company KCTV publisher Min Khoeun faced legal action after refusing to delete an article and video posted on the website showing Leng Navatra Group pumping sand to fill the lake to install a concrete road for accessing their development project in Kandal province.</p> <p>Min Khoeun said he is not concerned because he posted based on what the villagers have requested and his co-worker went to the site and saw the fact with pictures and videos taken as well as interviewed. He will hire a lawyer if he would be sued. (See annex 1)</p>
2-Nov-22	1	<p>Prom Ratha, a reporter for online outlet Lous Seng News (LSN), based in Svay Rieng province, said he was threatened with arrest by the provincial police chief.</p> <p>The threat happened after the journalist went to cover a traffic accident Bavat town. He said police officer Em Sovannarith ordered him to delete photos and video of the traffic accident, or else he would arrest the reporter. As the journalist rejected the demand, the police grabbed the phone from Prom Ratha and deleted all videos and photos, and threw the phone away. The owner of LSN, Lus Seng, has filed a complaint to the provincial court seeking justice. (See annex 4)</p>
7-Oct-22	2	<p>Land Management Minister Chea Sophara called out two female reporter for VOD during a public forum, asking them to stand next to him and not to move, and asking one of his bodyguards to write down their names.</p> <p>During a meeting with the Preah Dal community in Siem Reap province, the minister accused the independent outlet of shoddy reporting, and ordered the journalists — a foreigner and a Cambodian — to stand near him so they would not confuse his words.</p> <p>He also said young journalists translate improperly and like to lie in an attempt to attract more readers.</p> <p>“Please stay here until the meeting has finished and do not move anywhere yet” Sophara said.</p> <p>One of the reporters, who asked to remain anonymous, told CamboJA that the comments and directives made her feel nervous, and said she viewed Sophara’s actions as an attempt to threaten her and other media outlets. (See annex 7)</p>

<b>6-Aug-22</b>	1	<p>Khoun Narim, a journalist of CamboJA News, was receiving a public reaction to his article “UN says press freedom in Cambodia remains severely restricted” from the spokesman of the Information Ministry, H.E Meas Sophorn.</p> <p>In an open letter to CamboJA and Khoun Narim, H.E Meas Sophorn rejected the paragraph “Information Ministry spokesman, Meas Sophorn, rejected the OHCHR findings, saying they came only from interviews with anti-government journalists and didn’t reflect the overall reality of the media in the country”. He stated that he did not reject the finding and said the journalist did not quote his message properly. (See annex 13)</p>
<b>7-Oct-22</b>	1	<p>On June 27, authorities expelled journalists and human rights observers from the NagaWorld rally site, including district security threatening and demanding VOD journalists (who preferred not to mention their names) delete photos and videos of authorities’ activities in public places.</p> <p>Responding to the action, the Information Ministry said lower-level authorities did not appear to fully understand their roles and acted outside of their remit. “I’ve discussed this matter, and maybe the lower-level authorities do not understand the issue,” said Phos Sovann, the Information Ministry’s information department director. (See annex 18)</p>
<b>29-Jun-22</b>	1	<p>Uon Chin, a reporter for CamboJA, was intimidated and threatened by local authorities at a peaceful gathering of Beong Tamok community members in front of the office of Prime Minister Hun Sen.</p> <p>One local authority pointed in his face and shouted, “Where are you from”. He replied, “I am from CamboJA”. The local authority, “Take out your press card,”. Un Chin started walking away from the authority since he was afraid his camera would be confiscated, and heard someone say on the walkie-talkie, “Bring him, bring him.”</p> <p>He regarded this case as a threat to him as well as other journalists and a restriction on press freedom. (See annex 17)</p>
<b>6-Jun-22</b>	1	<p>During the commune elections, Sorn Sarath, a reporter of CamboJA who covered the election at Veal Sbov Primary School polling station in Phnom Penh, was questioned by police officers serving as security guards and the chief of the polling station. He was not allowed into the station to take pictures when ballot counting started.</p> <p>“I was questioned by police and polling stations chief when covering news in Veal Sbov and not allowed to go close to take pictures while counting,” Sarath said. (See annex 21)</p>

<b>3-Jun-22</b>	2	<p>Two journalists from VOD, Seng Thai and Hy Chay, were questioned and by authorities, who took photos of their press cards, while they were interviewing two candidates in Phnom Penh’s Teuk La Ork 1 commune about the Cambodia People’s Party’s propaganda activities and their plans to serve their constituents.</p> <p>On the election day, when they interviewed 5 people at the polling station at Wat Chak Ongre Leu, a man in civilian clothes asked them: What are you interviewing about? What channel are you going to broadcast on and when? And are you asking people about who they were going to vote for?</p> <p>Thai said he understood the questions as “a threat to free press during the election,” noting that if they had asked about who people were voting for, they may have been arrested or prosecuted like a pair of Cambodia Daily journalists charged for election reporting in 2013. (See annex 22)</p>
<b>10-Apr-22</b>	1	<p>Suon Vutha, a citizen journalist, said he was on his way from Kampot to Phnom Penh on April 10 when he reached a checkpoint in Kandal’s Loeuk Dek district and saw taxi vans overflowing with passengers, but traffic police were taking money to look the other way.</p> <p>Traffic police threatened Suon Vutha for recording them taking money from motorists, and ordered him to delete his photos and videos.</p> <p>He was taken in for questioning for more than an hour. Officers demanded to see his “mission letter” as well as identification and ordered him to delete his videos and sign an agreement to stop. (See annex 26)</p>
<b>11-Mar-22</b>	3	<p>On 11 March 2022 at 2:30 pm, two VOD journalists and one citizen journalist were harassed by the Phnom Penh authorities while they were covering the resumption strike of NagaWorld employees.</p> <p>A female journalist of VOD who asked to be anonymous told CamboJA, “The authorities banned me and my ex-pat colleague from taking pictures, asking for our mission letters, and forcing us to delete pictures and videos, otherwise, the authorities would bring us to the police station”. (See annex 30)</p>

22-Feb-22	1	Chhaya Neat, editor-in-chief of CPC News, got a phone call from a police officer named Morn Socheat who complained about a news article about on a violence committed by the police officer. Morn Socheat said CPC News’s article was biased and not true. The police officer asked CPC News to stop publishing his case or he will be sued, but Chahaya Neat refused and said this call and complaint is a threat to his journalism profession. (See annex 32)
5-Feb-22	1	A foreign journalist for VOD was intimidated and threatened with arrest while he was reporting on labor strike activities in Phnom Penh. On the afternoon of 5 February 2022, the journalist was photographing and filming interactions between authorities and NagaWorld casino strikers in a public space in the capital.  Uniformed officers demanded to see original documents and threatened the journalist with arrest if they continued taking photos and video and did not leave the area, compelling the journalist to stop reporting and leave. (See annex 33)
19-Jan-22	2	Two journalists from Cambodian Express News (CEN) said they received a death threat from a dog owner after they livestreamed a conflict between the dog owner and a person who was bitten by his dog.  The CEN journalists were afraid of this threat and recorded the voice of the dog’s owner for evidence in case something happens to them in the future. (See annex 35)

**CASE STUDY: Journalist Covering Labor Strike Threatened With Arrest in Phnom Penh**



On the afternoon of 5 February 2022, a foreign journalist for VOD was intimidated and threatened with arrest while she was reporting on labor strike activities in Phnom Penh. The journalist was photographing and filming interactions between authorities and NagaWorld casino strikers in a public space in the capital when a man in plainclothes who identified himself as an immigration officer stopped the journalist, demanded her passport and work permit, and declined to show his own credentials.

*A freelance photographer was physically harassed by authorities while covering the NagaWorld strike. Photo supplied.*



*Local officials push back a photojournalist at the NagaWorld protest in Phnom Penh on June 27, 2022. (Hean Rangsey/VOD)*

The journalist showed their CCIM-issued ID card and offered to show a copy of their passport. The officer, however, demanded to see original documents and threatened the journalist with arrest if they continued taking photos and video, compelling the journalist to stop reporting and leave.

Uniformed officers spoke to the man in plainclothes multiple times while he was questioning the journalist. The man also suggested to the journalist that he stopped them because they were working as a journalist.

While authorities have the right to justly enforce laws, journalists equally have the right to report the news. The 1995 Press Law prohibits pre-publication censorship like what was exhibited during the incident on February 5. (See annex 33)

In another incident, on Friday 11th, March 2022 at 2:30 pm, two VOD journalists and one citizen journalist were harassed by the Phnom Penh authorities while they were covering the resumption strike of Naga World’s employees.

A female journalist of VOD who asked to be anonymous told CamboJA that “The authorities banned me and my ex-pat colleague from taking pictures, asking for our mission letters, and forcing us to delete pictures and videos, otherwise, the authorities would bring us to the police station. (See annex 30)

**3.5. Discrimination**

Five journalists faced discrimination, in which officials singled out independent journalists for different treatment or barred access to information seen as critical of the government. This is a new category in this year’s report, as it appears to be an increasingly frequent tactic to marginalize independent journalists.

**LIST OF DISCRIMINATION CASES:**

Date of incident	No. of Journalists	Summary of the cases
13-Nov-22	2	<p>Following the ASEAN Summit on November 10-13, Prime Minister Hun Sen invited foreign and local reporters for a two-hour press conference at the Peace Palace — but denied access to VOD and VOA.</p> <p>Information Ministry spokesperson Meas Sophoan said that reporters from the two news outlets “never attend” these press conferences, and alleged they “cut only a few points” from conference speeches to publish. (See annex 3)</p>
04-Jan-22	3	<p>VOD, EAC, and GN time were not allowed to attend a press conference on the arrest of NagaWorld staff on the morning of 4 January 2022, held by the Phnom Penh Municipal authority.</p> <p>The director of media at the Cambodian Center for Independent Media, Ith Sothoeut, said banning journalists from covering press conferences under the pretext of not registering was a restriction on press freedom. (See annex 38)</p>

**3.6. Detained for questioning**

Nine journalists were detained for questioning because of their work. Five journalists were detained for reporting on a land clearance controversy at a wildlife sanctuary, while the other four were detained for covering alleged illegal business. (See the case study: Journalists detained, beaten)

**CASE STUDY: Journalists detained, beaten**



Five journalists from local independent media outlet VOD were detained for about seven hours on August 16, after reporting on a land clearance controversy at a wildlife sanctuary. They were arrested at about 11 am at Phnom Tamao Zoo by BHQ officers after authorities said they'd entered a prohibited area, and then brought to Bati district police station.

The journalists were: Hy Chhay, 34, Keat Sokrithsotheary, 23, Danielle Keeton-Olsen, 28, Mom Monyroth, 40, and Hean Rangsy, 28.

*Journalists and environmental activists stand in front of Bati district police station after questioning by police, August 16, 2022. CamboJA/ Bun Rithy*

A VOD videographer was slapped in the face by a BHQ officer when the journalist refused to handover the phone he was using to record officers questioning his VOD colleagues.

“I was walking to the pagoda [in Phnom Tamao forest] and was told that VOD reporters were detained. I returned to them and took out my phone intending to film them for documentation. One bodyguard came up to me, told me not to film and wanted to take my phone from me, but I refused. He slapped me in the face and snatched the phone from my hand,” said Hy Chhay, the videographer.

Mom Moniroth, a reporter from VOD who was also detained and released, said it was a violation of reporters’ rights because we were only carrying out our work. “They didn’t even ask what we were doing, they just reacted violently,” Mr. Moniroth said “I think that it is unjust because what we are doing does not violate the law and reporters have rights of movement. There was no indication reporters were banned from accessing the site,” he added.

Moniroth said that he and his colleagues had gone there to report on the latest developments related to the replanting of trees after the prime minister reversed the issuance of land concessions. “The arrests tarnish the government’s image, because they should allow professional reporters to work without fear,” Mr. Moniroth said.

Nop Vy, executive director of the Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA), said that the officers who carried out the detentions had violated the press law as well as the reporters’ human rights. He added that local authorities still do not understand the roles and responsibilities of journalists, and often consider journalists the enemy.

“These detentions were another blow to freedom of the press, which is already restricted,” he said.

Am Sam Ath, operations director at rights group Licadho, said he believed that the authorities’ detention of the five VOD journalists had violated their rights as journalists and the public’s right to access to information.

In order to be transparent, the government should allow journalists to confirm whether replanting was taking place, he continued, noting that the Phnom Tamao issue has drawn a lot of criticism.

“The detention of journalists, on the contrary, is a violation of the freedom of the press,” he said.

(See annex 11)

### Background

The violence and detentions of five VOD journalists on 16 August 2022 came just days after the Phnom Tamao forest underwent massive deforestation, losing around 500 hectares of forest at the roughly 2,000-hectare site in about one week.

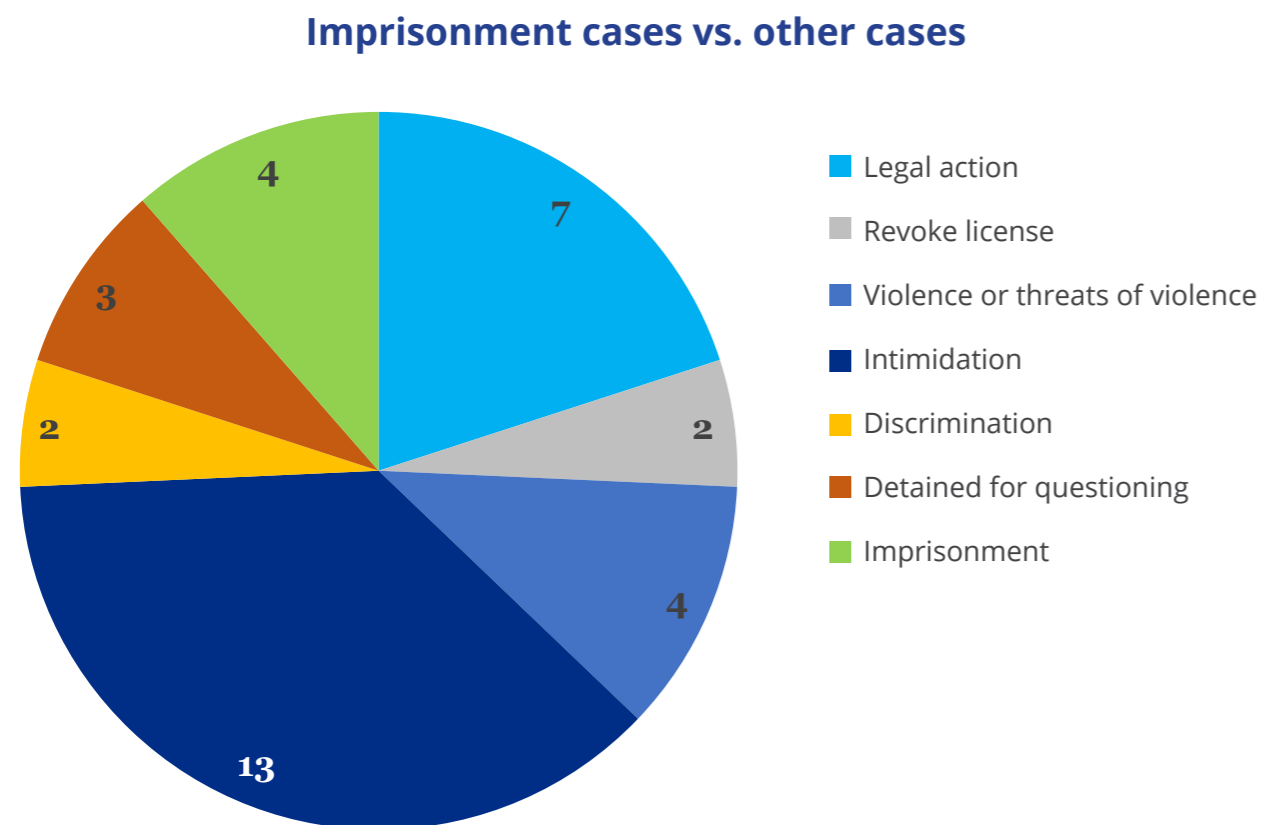
Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the forest to be replanted on 7 August, cancelling concessions given by his government to several businessmen, including Leng Navatra and Khun Sea. The reversal came after a series of VOD articles featuring photos and drone footage of the rapid deforestation, other news articles and drone footage of the clearing, and public outrage on social media over the forest’s destruction.

The five VOD journalists detained on Tuesday were following up on their earlier reporting on the forest clearing, including conducting interviews and photographing and filming using a drone.

### 3.7. Imprisonment

Among the 54 harassed journalists, 7 journalists, or over 13%.

**FIGURE 2: IMPRISONMENT CASES VS. OTHER CASES**



### 3.7.1. Convictions using criminal code

All 7 imprisoned journalists were charged with incitement to commit a crime, inciting people to protest against authorities, or inciting to discriminate and public defamation, under articles 494, 495, 496, and 305 of the Criminal Code. In most of these cases, the journalists were arrested without a warrant.

While Prime Minister Hun Sen spoke out about the arrest of one journalist for the pro-government Bayon TV, which was apparently unrelated to their work as a journalist, he has made no such calls when independent journalists face prosecution.

In fact, journalists continue to face criminal incitement charges on a regular basis. Groups including CamboJA have called on the government to apply the Press Law in cases involving journalists, but to little avail.

In cases observed this year, journalists were convicted of crimes related to broadcasting public protests, expressing opinions about COVID-19 and publishing accusations of corruption against powerful people. It’s possible that journalists were in the wrong in these cases, but that doesn’t mean they belong in jail.

There is a civil process for cases of defamation and misrepresentation by members of the media. It should be exhausted before criminal measures are even considered.

### 3.7.2. Journalists remain in prison

As of December 2022, seven journalists remained in prison because of criminal charges, including Thai Bunrith and Kao Piseth, who were convicted of incitement to commit a felony. Five other journalists from online media outlets are still in prison and pre-trial detention on extortion charges.

No. of journalists	Summary of the case	Status
5	Five online journalists were arrested by the Kampong Chhnang police on 6 and 7 January 2022 for allegedly inciting people to conduct a protest against the authorities.  Those five journalists included Keo Hour of SBT news, Prak Songha, Chhon Kongdara, Sang Chanthon, and Ouk Parady of MCTV. All five were charged with incitement to commit a felony. Chan Kunthy, 51, the wife of Sang Chanthon, said the arrests were made after her husband and his colleagues covered a land dispute in Kampong Leng district.	They were released on 27 July 2022 after a negotiation. (see Annex 37)

No. of journalists	Summary of the case	Status
1	Sok Saran, 50, a reporter for “Kampuchea Roal Thnagay News” based in Battambang province, was arrested on 9 January 2022 by the Battambang provincial court on a charge of inciting the community to protest against local authorities.	He was released on 9 July 2022 after the provincial court found that he hasn’t committed any mistake. (See Annex 36)
1	<p>Thai Bunrith, 51, a TCN TV producer, was arrested on 26 May following a lawsuit filed by the Kandal provincial police. He had aired news claiming that Kandal provincial authorities had received bribes from illegal gambling den owners to turn a blind eye. Kandal Provincial Court Investigating Judge Ath Chandara said Bunrith was charged with “Inciting to Discriminate and Public Defamation” under Articles 494, 496, and 305 of the Criminal Code.</p> <p>Kandal Provincial Police officer Leang Sameth said Bunrith’s broadcast claimed that police and military police officers were complicit with illegal online gambling, lottery, and cock fighting in Kandal province.</p>	As of December 2022, he remains in prison. (See Annex 23)
1	<p>Sem Diya, 43, a publisher of Battambang Post was arrested on 10 July 2022, after he livestreamed on his Facebook page from a protest in Phnom Prek district, Battambang province. He was accused of incitement to commit a crime.</p> <p>Sem Diya’s wife told RFA that the arrest is unfair to her husband as he did not commit any wrongdoing. She said her husband was arrested after filming and posting a video of a protest urging Cambodian authorities to stop fining Thai trucks transporting corn. Farmers were worried the authorities’ action would prevent Thai merchants from buying their crops.</p>	He was released on 21 October 2022 after he was in prison for over three months. The Battambang provincial court sentenced him and two protesters to one year in prison on charges of incitement to commit crimes, but suspended the remainder of their sentences. (See Annex 15)

No. of journalists	Summary of the case	Status
2	Mey Chumnith, publisher of MCN TV online, and his reporter, Hun Kimsreng were arrested by Kampot authorities on 3 August 2022 for alleged extortion. Chamnan, the brother of Mey Chumnit, said that the arrest of these two journalists was related to a land case involving the police chiefs in Kampot province. The director of the Information Department of Kampot province, Ork Samnang confirmed this arrest, saying these two journalists were arrested for the alleged extortion. According to the verdict dated 1 November 2022, the Kampot provincial court sentenced both journalists to two years, but one year in prison and one year to be suspended.	As of December 2022, they remain in prison. (See Annex 5)
3	<p>Three journalists were accused of demanding 4,000 USD in exchange for not publishing information on illegal purchases of timber by Vietnamese logging company PNT.</p> <p>Mom Vibal, 44, Tin Try, 29, and Tin Sitha, 27 — reporters for online and television news outlets in Preah Vihear province — were taken into custody on Nov. 23 and charged with extortion following a lawsuit filed by Sat Nak, 30, of representative of PNT.</p>	As of December 2022, they remain in prison. (See Annex 2)
1	<p>Kao Piseth, a 32-year-old journalist who writes for the online publication Siem Reap Toan Haet Kar (Breaking News), was arrested on July 14, 2021, and charged with incitement to commit a crime and obstruction of the implementation of measures to prevent COVID-19 after publicly criticizing of the government over the use of Chinese-made vaccines on Cambodian citizens. He was sentenced to two years in prison on 18 January 2022.</p> <p>The Battambang Appeal Court on 5 July 2022 upheld the provincial court’s guilty verdict and sentencing against Kao Piseth, who was also ordered to pay a fine of 3,000 000 (three million Riels).</p> <p>The lawyer said Piseth had not known he was committing an offense by making the comments regarding the vaccines. He said his client decided to take the matter to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the appeal court’s guilty verdict against Kao Piseth on 1 February 2023.</p>	As of December 2022, he remains in prison. (See Annex 16)



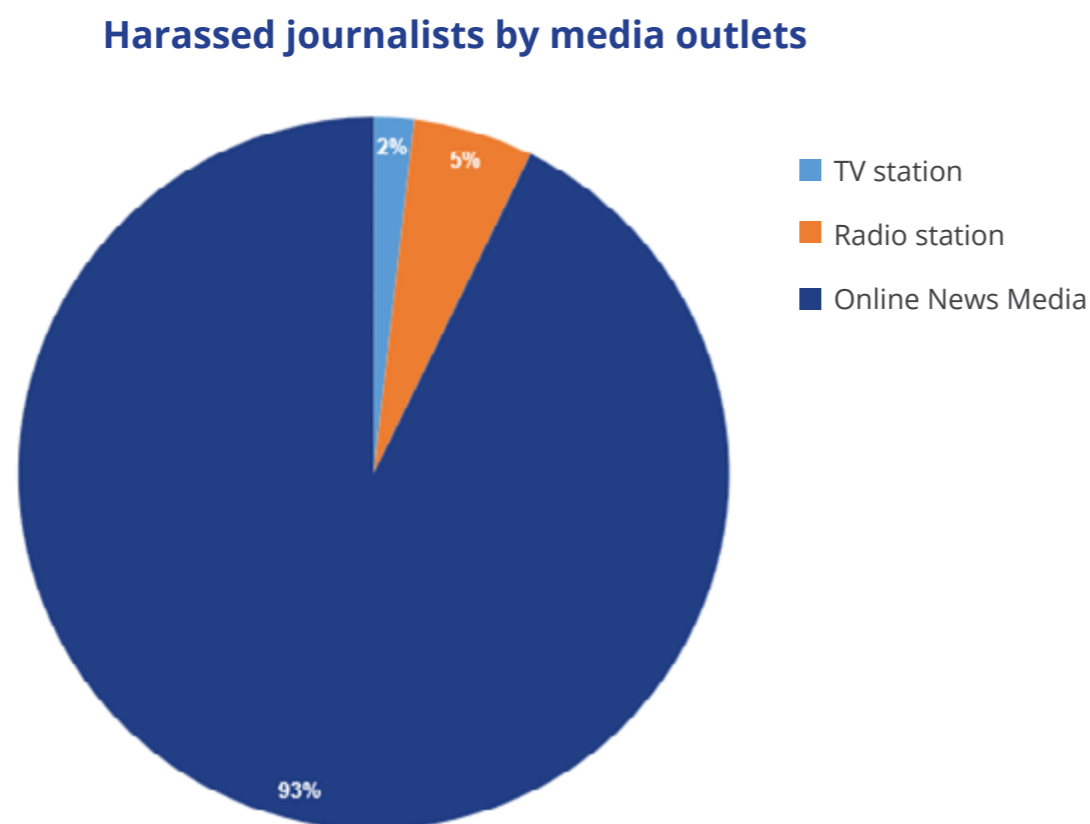
## 4. Types of media outlets

Among 54 reportedly harassed journalists, 50 journalists were online media reporters, which includes websites, TV online and social media pages. Three journalists worked for radio stations and one was from TV station.

**TABLE 3: NUMBER OF HARASSED JOURNALISTS BY TYPE OF MEDIA OUTLETS**

Types of media outlets	No. of journalists
TV Station	1
Radio Station	3
Online News Media	50

**FIGURE 4: HARASSED JOURNALISTS BY MEDIA OUTLETS**



The large majority of online journalists facing harassment likely reflects the rapid increase in online media outlets and the lack of training or institutional protection for the journalists working for these outlets.

## 5. Journalism Situation during the 2022 Communal Elections

The Cambodian communal election was held on 5th June 2022, with 17 political parties participating including the Candlelight Party, made up of members of the former opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party.

CamboJA recorded at least four cases of harassment against five journalists during this commune elections.

A journalist from CamboJA News, **Sorn Sarath**, was banned from taking photos and questioned by local authorities when he went to cover news in Veal Sbov, Kandal province on the election day.

Three days before the election, **two journalists from VOD** were intimidated by local authorities while they were interviewing a political candidate. On June 3, the last day of political campaign activities, VOD journalists **Seng Thai** and **Hy Chay** interviewed two candidates in Phnom Penh’s Teuk La Ork 1 commune about the Cambodia People’s Party’s propaganda activities and their plans to serve their constituents. A third candidate asked to take photos of the journalists and their media credentials from the NEC.

“We do not understand why they take photos of our cards and ask for phone numbers,” Seng Thai said. “We are scared since we do not know what they are going to do with this information.”

**Seng Thai** said that on election day, he and another colleague, **Huy Ousa**, interviewed 5 people at the polling station at Wat Chak Ongre Leu, where a man in civilian clothes asked them: What are you interviewing about? What channel are you going to broadcast on and when? And are you asking people about who they were going to vote for?

Thai said he understood the questions as “a threat to free press during the election,” noting that if they had asked about who people were voting for, they may have been arrested or prosecuted like a pair of Cambodia Daily journalists charged for election reporting in 2017.

**Sun Narin**, a reporter for VOA, also encountered the same challenges when he went to cover news at several polling places in Lvea Aem district, Kandal province during the election day. He said he saw many local authorities inside and outside of polling stations.

When he went to take photos at the Arey Ksat voting station, two police officers came and stopped him from taking any photos, and then asked him to wait for their boss to come. After waiting for a while, he decided to go. The police also asked him, “What is the next polling station are you going to?” to which he said he wasn’t sure.

“I think this case is often happening to journalists and many local authorities do not understand the rights and duties of journalists. But the local authorities raised that they just followed the guidelines of NEC, so NEC should issue a clear guideline stating the rights of journalists that they can take any photos without asking permission,” Narin said.



### 6.3. Long-Awaited Information Access Law Awaits Council of Ministers Approval

After years of officials' pledging to finish a law regulating public access to government records, the information minister on Thursday said the draft law had reached a review stage at the Council of Ministers, but he offered no timeline for the bill's passage.

Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said the draft Access to Information Law had been sent to the Office of the Council of Ministers "months ago" after officials finished discussions with the Justice Ministry about provisions related to penalties for officials who failed to provide requested information.

"We have finalized all this [discussion with the Justice Ministry]. We have already sent to the Council of Ministers, and the Council of Ministers will set time for a meeting," Kanharith told reporters on the sidelines of a media conference in Phnom Penh, organized by Unesco, a U.N. body spearheading the draft law for more than a decade.

"We have sent [the draft law] a few months ago but as we have known, we were busy at work with the Asean ministerial meeting," Kanharith said, without specifying when the draft law was sent to the Council of Ministers.<sup>4</sup>

### 6.4. Gov't says journalists should notify authorities for repeated provincial reporting

Government spokesman Phay Siphon said on Sept. 1 that journalists should report to the provincial information department when frequently reporting in a jurisdiction, a suggestion rejected by an independent-media advocate.

"If the journalists have frequent missions in a province, they should submit a letter to the provincial information department" to state their intentions, Siphon said at a press conference reviewing five years of achievements by the Information Ministry.

He said officials can feel intimidated by frequent visits, and said notification letters can be valid for a year, he said.

"I've seen some journalists' behavior — they mostly just only wear their organization's card, not a card approved by the ministry, and intimidate people in the province," Siphon said.

Cambodian Journalists Alliance executive director Nop Vy, however, said there should be no such requirement to inform authorities about reporting visits.

"Citizens don't have to inform their presence to authorities or anyone when they travel, and we journalists [should not] have to inform them before travel [either]," Vy said.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Khuon Narim, "Long-Awaited Information Access Law Awaits Council of Ministers Approval," *CamboJA News*, 28 October 2022, <https://bit.ly/3ZW36ln>

<sup>5</sup> Mam Sampichida, "Gov't says journalists should notify authorities for repeated provincial reporting," *VOD*, 2 September 2022, <https://bit.ly/3ZTUVMU>

## IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

We are cautious to draw any conclusions from the overall decline in the number of reported harassment, given the lack of any government initiative or order that suggests the decline is an intentional result of official attitudes or policy.

What we can say conclusively is that too many journalists are still being subjected to various forms of harassment, pressure, and violence in 2022.

We have seen independent outlets increasingly shut out of official events, and no effort to hold individuals who harass or attack journalists accountable for their actions.

Indeed, the message often coming from the ministerial level on down is that intimidation of journalists is OK. And the government spokesman even announced new, arbitrary rules meant to limit media rights.

Journalists are still experiencing surveillance, unnecessary restrictions, and discrimination from local authorities while doing their jobs. Taken together, these realities often lead to self-censorship, which quietly undermines a free press and functioning democracy.

### CamboJA also observed a number of worrying trends

- The Criminal Code is almost always used in cases involving journalists, even when the Press Law is the obvious legal avenue. This has the intentional effect of striking fear in journalists, and chilling critical coverage of powerful people. It also shows that Cambodia's government is scared of a free press. Media advocates and rights groups have repeatedly called on officials and the courts to apply the press law in cases of journalistic malpractice. It's time for the government and judiciary to listen.
- Local officials felt empowered to threaten and impede journalists trying to cover politically sensitive public activities, such as the NagaWorld worker protest in Phnom Penh and land disputes across the country. While the Information Ministry occasionally spoke out in support of reporters in these cases, a clear message must be sent that journalists have rights, and officials at all levels must respect their freedom to operate in public spaces — or face accountability for violating the law.
- Independent media outlets are subject to arbitrary discrimination, threats and actions. These incidents range from journalists being barred from events, singled out at press conferences or more drastic measures such as the Information Ministry revoking media licenses. In most cases, there is no clear process behind these decisions, and no recourse for journalists or media outlets. In a truly free media environment, all journalists should be given the same rights and freedoms.

Phnom Penh, which has the highest concentration of journalists and media outlets, predictably saw the highest number of reports of harassment, however the fact that incidents were reported in 14 provinces highlights a nationwide problem. The particularly high number of cases in Kompong Chhnang raises particular concern about the media environment there.

It is once again worth noting that the vast majority of journalists who were harassed in 2022 worked for online media outlets. While many of these outlets are small, together they account for an important and growing source of information for Cambodians, which should receive an outsized focus for organizations seeking to improve the country's media sector.

## Key recommendations

### The Judiciary

- Drop all unjust criminal charges against journalists including Kao Piseth & Try Sophal.
- Adhere to international human rights standards and legal principles by applying Cambodia's Press Law on cases related to the non-criminal work of journalists.
- Conduct a thorough investigation into attacks on journalists and bring offenders to justice.
- Provide training opportunities to investigating judges, trial judges, police, and lawyers in the application and implementation of the Press Law, including training on wrongful gender stereotyping, gender-based violence and harassment, in particular against women journalists.

### Government and Ministry of Information

- Ensure that all journalists can exercise their rights to report freely and without fear, especially the report on national election 2023.
- Take immediate measures to address gender-based violence against journalists including taking steps to ensure functioning gender-sensitive complaints mechanisms and procedures.
- Promote use of the press law, rather than criminal code, in cases related to journalism.
- Engage all stakeholders, especially journalists, in the process of drafting all media-related laws, such as amendments to the Press Law, and other laws covering cyber security, cybercrime, and access to information.
- The Ministry of Information in particular must play a more active role in supporting journalists facing harassment and promote the use of the Press Law in media-related legal disputes.
- Retract or clarify guidelines that are emboldening local authorities to arbitrarily restrict and sanction journalists covering public activities.

### Journalists, Media Organizations and Donors

- With a focus on the growing group of online media reporters, provide trainings and opportunities related to fundamental principles of journalism, code of ethics for journalists and related laws and freedoms.
- Provide training for journalists on physical safety and digital security.
- Provide psychological support to journalists.
- Provide legal support to journalists when they have been accused and charged.

## V. Annex

### 1. December 23, 2022: Phnom Penh

Digital media company KCTV publisher Min Khoeun faced legal action after refusing to delete an article and video posted on the website showing Leng Navatra Group pumping sand to fill the lake to install a concrete road for accessing their development project in Kandal province.

Min Khoeun said he is not concerned because he posted based on what the villagers have requested and his co-worker went to the site and saw the fact with pictures and videos taken as well as interviewed. He will hire a lawyer if he would be sued.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. November 23, 2022: Preah Vihear

Journalists and environmental activists in Cambodia are criticizing authorities' filing of charges against three reporters accused of taking bribes to cover up illegal logging in a northern province, saying the loggers themselves should also be charged.

Mom Vibal, 44, Tin Try, 29, and Tin Sitha, 27 — reporters for online and television news outlets in Preah Vihear province — were taken into custody on Nov. 23 and charged with extortion following a lawsuit filed by Vietnamese logging company PNT.

The three are accused of demanding that U.S.\$4,000 be paid to a group of four, including the three now under arrest, in exchange for blocking information on illegal purchases of timber by PNT, according to local media accounts.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. November 13, 2022: Phnom Penh

Following the ASEAN Summit on November 10-13, Prime Minister Hun Sen invited foreign and local reporters for a two-hour press conference at the Peace Palace — but denied access to VOD and VOA.

Information Ministry spokesperson Meas Sophoan said that reporters from the two news outlets "never attend" these press conferences, and alleged they "cut only a few points" from conference speeches to publish.<sup>8</sup>

### 4. November 02, 2022: Svay Reang

Prom Ratha, a reporter for online outlet Lous Seng News (LSN), based in Svay Rieng province, said he was threatened with arrest by the provincial police chief.

<sup>6</sup> <https://cambojanews.com/journalists-facing-extortion-charges-tycoon-threats-for-sensitive-stories/>

<sup>7</sup> RFA Khmer, "Cambodian journalists reporting on illegal logging charged with extortion", December 1, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3ZWs2yv>

<sup>8</sup> IFJ, "Cambodia: Hun Sen government bans journalists' access," IFJ, November 18, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3UUYu2j>

The threat happened after the journalist went to cover a traffic accident in Bavet town. He said police officer Em Sovannarith ordered him to delete photos and video of the traffic accident, or else he would arrest the reporter. As the journalist rejected the demand, the police grabbed the phone from Prom Ratha and deleted all videos and photos, and threw the phone away.

The owner of LSN, Lus Seng, has filed a complaint to the provincial court seeking justice.<sup>9</sup>

### 5. November 01, 2022: Kampot

Mey Chumnith, one of the owners of online-only channel MCN TV Online, and his assistant, Hun Kimsreng, have been placed in pre-trial detention, according to Mann Boret, the Kampot provincial court spokesman.

Mao Chanmathurith, Kampot provincial police chief, said the two were arrested on Monday after “they used press cards arbitrarily to commit a messy thing [extort money] but I do not know the amount of money.”

MCN TV Online has a Facebook page with just over 900 followers but no website. Regular reports are uploaded on social issues, poor families seeking help, gambling and crime. (verdict)

### 6. October 13, 2022: Kampot

Yuos Sareoun, a reporter for the Life and Sports News, was summoned by the Kampot provincial police after publishing an article criticizing the deputy provincial police chief for allegedly inappropriate words with a suspect’s family.

Yean Thun, deputy district police chief in Teuk Chu district, accused Yuos Sareoun of publishing fake news and public defamation.

However, Yuos Sareoun said that he published accurate news with professionalism. He did not show up at the provincial police office and said the summons should be sent to the institution, not the individual.<sup>10</sup>

### 7. October 07, 2022: Siem Reap

Land Management Minister Chea Sophara called out two female reporters for VOD during a public forum, asking them to stand next to him and not to move, and asking one of his bodyguards to write down their names.

During a meeting with the Preah Dal community in Siem Reap province, the minister accused the independent outlet of shoddy reporting, and ordered the journalists — a foreigner and a Cambodian — to stand near him so they would not confuse his words.

He also said young journalists translate improperly and like to lie in an attempt to attract more readers.

<sup>9</sup> Lous Seng complaint letter

<sup>10</sup> Live and Sport News, October 13, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WiGdNi>

“Please stay here until the meeting has finished and do not move anywhere yet” Sophara said.

One of the reporters, who asked to remain anonymous, told CamboJA that the comments and directives made her feel nervous, and said she viewed Sophara’s actions as an attempt to threaten her and other media outlets.<sup>11</sup>

### 8. September 08, 2022: Battambang

Sen Vireak, a reporter for SBN Post News in Battambang province, was summoned by the provincial court in August after local authorities accused him of incitement for live streaming from a land dispute.

He told CamboJA that he is very concerned about this allegation against him, noting that he went to cover information professionally and with the invitation of the community members, with no intention of inciting or leading any rebellion.<sup>12</sup>

### 9. August 22, 2022: Phnom Penh

The broadcasting license of San Bunthoen Post News was revoked on 22 August 2022 over “immoral acts” during his live stream on Facebook. San Bunthoen was both a Facebook streamer and member of the prime minister’s bodyguard unit.

The decision to revoke San Bunthoen’s broadcasting license came just one day after Hun Sen reacted to a video livestream of him drinking, smashing dishes and cursing on his social media page. The prime minister said that “the bad character of San Bunthoen cannot be changed” and ordered his expulsion from the bodyguard unit and army.<sup>13</sup>

### 10. August 21, 2022: Preah Vihear

Sou Senghak, 60, a journalist at Samarakot News in Preah Vihear province, was allegedly beaten up by an army commander on August 20 after he witnessed what he suspected to be the illegal transportation of timber.

Senghak suspected the wood had been obtained illegally and considered stopping the truck to investigate. However, before he had the chance to do so, he says the Battalion’s commander exited the vehicle, approached Senghak, who was standing with his wife, and hit them both, causing Senghak’s nose to bleed.<sup>14</sup>

### 11. August 16, 2022: Takeo

Five journalists from independent media outlet VOD were detained for about seven hours on August 16, after reporting on a land clearance controversy at a wildlife sanctuary. The arrest was at about 11 am at Phnom Tamao Zoo, after authorities said the journalists had entered a prohibited area, and took them to the Bati district police station.

<sup>11</sup> CamboJA interviewed via a phone call

<sup>12</sup> Sok Savy, “A journalist was summoned by the Battambang provincial court after live streaming on land dispute,” CamboJA News, September 08, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3SKLXx3>

<sup>13</sup> Hul Reaksmey, “Watchdog Condemns Cambodia for Revoking Media Licenses,” VOA, April 05, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WrE96e>

<sup>14</sup> Seoung Nimol, Try Thaney, “Preah Vihear journalist assaulted by military commander,” CamboJA News, August 22, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3DrF3XG>

The journalists were: Hy Chhay, 34, Keat Sokrithsotheary, 23, Danielle Keeton Olsen, 28, Mom Monyroth, 40, and Hean Rangsy, 28.

Mom Moniroth, a reporter from VOD who was also detained and released, said that his colleague, a video reporter, was slapped in the face.<sup>15</sup>

### 12. August 09, 2022: Pursat

Sun Kvantha, a reporter for Penh Chet Media, was threatened and his car was shot by an anonymous person with a gun after he published an article on illegal cockfighting. The incident happened on the night of 8 August 2022 in Kro Vanh district, Pursat province.

In the article, it was alleged that Tang Sarith, the district police inspector, ignored the illegal cockfighting and did not dare to crack down, suggesting he might be involved with the illegal business.<sup>16</sup>

### 13. August 06, 2022: Phnom Penh

Khoun Narim, a journalist of CamboJA News, was receiving a public reaction to his article “UN says press freedom in Cambodia remains severely restricted” from the spokesman of the Information Ministry, H.E Meas Sophorn.

In an open letter to CamboJA and Khoun Narim, H.E Meas Sophorn rejected the paragraph “Information Ministry spokesman, Meas Sophorn, rejected the OHCHR findings, saying they came only from interviews with anti-government journalists and didn’t reflect the overall reality of the media in the country”. He stated that he did not reject the finding and said the journalist did not quote his message properly.<sup>17</sup>

### 14. July 18, 2022: Kratie

A local journalist in Kratie province was beaten by a group of cross-border timber traders on 18 July 2022 in Snoul district, Kratie province on the Vietnam border.

The victim was San Sim (called Ra), a 52-year-old reporter for Somraek Satrey Khmer in Snoul district, who told GN Times that while he was sitting and eating potatoes at a villager’s house, suddenly three people armed with sticks attacked him. He identified one of the perpetrators as Khyong, who he said was an active timber merchant who transports wood into Vietnam. According to the victim, the attack was in retaliation to his work of trying to get photos of merchants and report about their illegal trade.<sup>18</sup>

### 15. July 10, 2022: Battambang

Sem Diya, 43, a publisher of Battambang Post was arrested on 10 July 2022, after he livestreamed on Facebook from a protest in Phnom Prek district, Battambang province. He was accused of incitement to commit a crime.

<sup>15</sup> Khuon Narim, Sovann Sreypich, “Journalists and environmental activists detained, beaten,” CamboJA News, August 16, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Lxvb27>

<sup>16</sup> Sun Kvantha, Penh Chet Media, August 08, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WAqqsP>

<sup>17</sup> H.E Meas Sophorn, “Open Letter,” TVK, August 05, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3jmQppu>

<sup>18</sup> GN Time, “A journalist was physically attacked by illegal cross-border timber traders,” GN Times, July 19, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3sSWv2b>

Sem Diya’s wife told RFA that the arrest is unfair to her husband as he did not commit any wrongdoing. She said her husband was arrested after filming and posting a video of a protest urging Cambodian authorities to stop fining Thai trucks transporting corn. Farmers were worried the authorities’ action would prevent Thai merchants from buying their crops.

He was released on 21 October 2022 after spending three months in prison. The Battambang provincial court sentenced him and two protesters to one year in prison on charges of incitement to commit crimes, but suspended the remainder of their sentences.<sup>19</sup>

### 16. July 05, 2022: Battambang

The Battambang Appeal Court on upheld the provincial court’s guilty verdict against a journalist who criticized the government’s use of Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines.

Kao Piseth, a 32-year-old journalist who writes for the online publication Siem Reap Tanhetkar (Breaking News), was sentenced to two years in prison earlier this year for “incitement to commit crimes” and obstruction of the implementation of measures to prevent COVID-19.

In December 2021, the Battambang Provincial Court sentenced Piseth to two years in prison and a fine amounting to three million riel.<sup>20</sup>

### 17. June 29, 2022: Phnom Penh

Un Chin, a reporter for CamboJA, was intimidated and threatened by local authorities at a peaceful gathering of Beong Tamok community members in front of the office of Prime Minister Hun Sen. One local authority pointed in his face and shouted, “Where are you from”. He replied, “I am from CamboJA”. The local authority, “Take out your press card,”. Un Chin started walking away from the authority since he was afraid his camera would be confiscated, and heard someone say on the walkie-talkie, “Bring him, bring him.”

He regarded this case as a threat to him as well as other journalists and a restriction on press freedom.<sup>21</sup>

### 18. June 27, 2022: Phnom Penh

On June 27, authorities expelled journalists and human rights observers from the NagaWorld rally site, including district security threatening and demanding VOD journalists (preferred not to mention the name) delete photos and videos of authorities’ activities in public places.

Responding to the action, the Information Ministry said lower-level authorities did not appear to fully understand their roles and acted outside of their remit. “I’ve discussed this matter, and maybe the lower-level authorities do not understand the issue,” said Phos Sovann, the Information Ministry’s information department director.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sochi Vy, “Relatives Arrested in Phnom Prek District Demand Release of their Family,” RFA, July 12, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3P2zbZu>

<sup>20</sup> Ngay Nai, “Appeal Court Upholds Sentence Against Journalist Who Criticized Vaccines,” CamboJA, July 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Ko8FIP>

<sup>21</sup> Phone interview with CamboJA

<sup>22</sup> Pa Sokheng, “Information Ministry Challenges Phnom Penh’s NagaWorld Media Crackdown,” VOD, June 29, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3y9vAkR>

### 19. June 16, 2022: Mondolkiri

Bun Rith, 47, an owner of Rithy Dav Dek News, was summoned by Mondulkiri provincial police, accused of defaming of local authorities through social media.

The summons was made after he published traffic accident news dated 16 June 2022 alleging the local authority intentionally ignored the case after taking a bribe. Bun Rith admitted his mistake and changed the article after meeting with local authorities.<sup>23</sup>

### 20. June 08, 2022: Preah Vihear

A Preah Vihear journalist said he is facing arrest after filming a bulldozer clearing state land. The provincial court said the warrant was issued after the man failed to appear for questioning four times.

Try Sophal, a journalist for online news outlet “Everyday,” said the case dated back to late 2021, when he reported on a bulldozer clearing state land in Kulen district’s Srayong commune. He and other journalists then received complaints of stealing and threatening, he said.

“But I [only] saw the crime and I filmed and reported. Why did they accuse me of that?” Sophal said. Sophal said he was also beaten at the time but that the provincial court had released the assailants. He complained to the Anti-Corruption Unit about the court.<sup>24</sup>

### 21. June 06, 2022: Phnom Penh

During the commune elections, Sorn Sarath, a reporter of CamboJA who covered the election at Veal Sbov Primary School polling station in Phnom Penh, was questioned by police officers serving as security guards and the chief of the polling station. He was not allowed into the station to take pictures when ballot counting started.

“I was questioned by police and polling stations chief when covering news in Veal Sbov and not allowed to go close to take pictures while counting,” Sarath said.<sup>25</sup>

### 22. June 03, 2022: Phnom Penh

Two journalists from VOD, Seng Thai and Hy Chay, were questioned and by authorities, who took photos of their press cards, while they were interviewing two candidates in Phnom Penh’s Teuk La Ork 1 commune about the Cambodia People’s Party’s propaganda activities and their plans to serve their constituents.

On the election day, when they interviewed 5 people at the polling station at Wat Chak Ongre Leu, a man in civilian clothes asked them: What are you interviewing about? What channel are you going to broadcast on and when? And are you asking people about who they were going to vote for? Thai said he understood the questions as “a threat to free press during the election,” noting that if they had asked about who people were voting for, they may have been arrested or prosecuted like a pair of Cambodia Daily journalists charged for election reporting in 2013.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Mondulkiri Police Commission Summon Letter

<sup>24</sup> Nhim Sokhorn, “Journalist Faces Arrest Warrant After Filming Land Clearing,” VOD, 13 April 2022, <https://bit.ly/3HsHT1u>

<sup>25</sup> CamboJA, “Quarterly Monitoring Report on Journalism Situation in Cambodia,” April-June 2022, <http://bit.ly/3UAyzgw>

<sup>26</sup> CamboJA, “Journalism Situation in Cambodia,” April-June 2022, <https://bit.ly/3UAyzgw>

### 23. May 26, 2022: Kandal

Thai Bunrith, 51, a TCN TV producer, was arrested on 26 May following a lawsuit filed by the Kandal provincial police. He was had aired news claiming that Kandal provincial authorities had received bribes from illegal gambling den owners to turn a blind eye. Kandal Provincial Court Investigating Judge Ath Chandara said Bunrith was charged with “Inciting to Discriminate and Public Defamation” under Articles 494, 496, and 305 of the Criminal Code.

Kandal Provincial Police officer Leang Sameth said Bunrith’s broadcast claimed that police and military police officers were complicit with illegal online gambling, lottery, and cock fighting in Kandal province.<sup>27</sup>

### 24. April 29, 2022: Sihanoukville

Mech Dara, VOD reporter, was detained for about two hours by General Department of Immigration in Sihanoukville after refusing to delete pictures he’d taken of a facility alleged to have been used by a forced labor operation. His phone, journalist card, institution card, social security card, and motorbike were temporarily confiscated.

“He [the immigration police officer] had [threatened to use] handcuffs against me,” Dara said. “If there is a law for taking pictures in public, and I need permission like this, I might resign to be a farmer.”<sup>28</sup>

### 25. April 21, 2022: Kompong Chhnang

Say Reaksmey, 31, Toun Chhonly, 51, reporters with Reaksmey Steung Treng; and Min Thy, 43, a reporter from Reakmey Banteay Dek were detained by the local authorities in Kampong Chhnang province for alleged invasion of privacy.

The three journalists went to cover news at the suspected illegal motor shop, following up on a call from some people who live around that area (Kampong Chhnang town). Upon their arrival, they started taking some pictures in front of the shop and suddenly the shop owner saw them and called the police to arrest them.

The police detained them for about two hours and released them on the same day as the police, assuring them that the Motor shop is legal.<sup>29</sup>

### 26. April 10, 2022: Kandal

Suon Vutha, a citizen journalist, said he was on his way from Kampot to Phnom Penh on April 10 when he reached a checkpoint in Kandal’s Loeuk Dek district and saw taxi vans overflowing with passengers, but traffic police were taking money to look the other way.

Traffic police threatened Suon Vutha for recording them taking money from motorists, and ordered him to delete his photos and videos.

<sup>27</sup> Buth Reaksmey Kongkea, “TV producer charged over defamation,” Khmer Times, May 30, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3O4ASpC>

<sup>28</sup> Khuon Narim, “On Press Freedom Day, Journalists Warn of Worsening Restrictions,” CamboJA News, May 2, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3KDxv5q>

<sup>29</sup> Phone interviews with CamboJA

He was taken in for questioning for more than an hour. Officers demanded to see his “mission letter” as well as identification and ordered him to delete his videos and sign an agreement to stop.<sup>30</sup>

### 27. March 26, 2022: Phnom Penh

Meas Sora, a reporter of Measora news website, was threatened with violence while he was streaming the illegal cockfighting in Steung Meanchey district, Phnom Penh.

The owner of the cockfighting operation allegedly hit Meas Sora’s car, broke the mirror and tried to confiscate journalist’s phone to prevent taking any photos at the illegal cockfighting arena site.<sup>31</sup>

### 28. March 22, 2022: Battambang

Lim Phally, 43, a reporter for Los Seng News, was charged and sent to court after a livestream report from January 16 in which he alleged a Battambang timber factory had illegally processing luxury wood.

“We saw him actively transporting timber in and out of Battambang every day. When our reporters went to cover it, he complained against us, accusing us of defamation and disseminating [false] information — even though I have documents, videos, and photos of him carrying wood.” Phally said.

Battambang provincial forestry department director Chhim Vachira said the factory was licensed and all the wood transported to the factory had a valid permit. “Without being legal, they would not be able to run. So, in my opinion, if it was not legal, it would not be possible to be open in the center of the city.” Vachira said.<sup>32</sup>

### 29. March 15, 2022: Phnom Penh

Three media outlets had their licenses canceled. BayongTimes, Khmercovertv (KCTV), and Cambodia Today shut down after the ministry said in a statement they had “published information that violated journalistic professional ethics and corporate contracts.”

In early February, Cambodia Today published an investigative story about alleged corruption within the Ministry of Labor, which the editor suspected was the reason behind their termination.

“I published an article about the corrupt bidding process at the Ministry of Labor, which wastes millions of dollars of the national budget. Then the officials of the Ministry of Information asked me to take down the article, but I refused,” he said.<sup>33</sup>

### 30. March 11, 2022: Phnom Penh

On 11 March 2022 at 2:30 pm, two VOD journalists and one citizen journalist were harassed by the Phnom Penh authorities while they were covering the resumption strike of NagaWorld employees.

<sup>30</sup> Pa Sokheng, “Journalist Alleges Threats After Filming Traffic Police Taking Money,” VOD, April 14, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3mWf2Ys>

<sup>31</sup> Meas Sora News, March 26, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3HWu0cH>

<sup>32</sup> Khut Sokun, “Journalist Taken to Court Over Report on Illegal Timber Factory,” VOD, March 22, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3uly51L>

<sup>33</sup> Ngay Nai, “Three online media outlets have had their licenses revoked,” CambolJA News, March 25, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3E6EDX4>

A female journalist of VOD who asked to be anonymous told CambolJA, “The authorities banned me and my ex-pat colleague from taking pictures, asking for our mission letters, and forcing us to delete pictures and videos, otherwise, the authorities would bring us to the police station.”<sup>34</sup>

### 31. March 11, 2022: Odar Meanchey

Chheoun Bunchhi, 52, a reporter of Kampuchea Daily news, was summoned by the provincial court of Oddar Meanchey province for allegedly publishing fake news on social media on 25 July 2021.

The summons was made after he published news on the land dispute between the community and the district Forestry Administration. During the hearing on January 31, the provincial court of Oddar Meanchey ordered Chheoun Bunchhi to pay four million riels, or about 1,000 USD, to the plaintiff. Bunchhi appealed the case.<sup>35</sup>

### 32. February 22, 2022: Phnom Penh

Chhaya Neat, editor-in-chief of CPC News, got a phone call from a police officer named Morn Soheat who complained about a news article about on a violence committed by the police officer. Morn Soheat said CPC News’s article was biased and not true. The police officer asked CPC News to stop publishing his case or he will be sued, but Chhaya Neat refused and said this call and complaint is a threat to his journalism profession.<sup>36</sup>

### 33. February 05, 2022: Phnom Penh

A foreign journalist for VOD was intimidated and threatened with arrest while he was reporting on labor strike activities in Phnom Penh. On the afternoon of 5 February 2022, the journalist was photographing and filming interactions between authorities and NagaWorld casino strikers in a public space in the capital.

Uniformed officers demanded to see original documents and threatened the journalist with arrest if they continued taking photos and video and did not leave the area, compelling the journalist to stop reporting and leave.<sup>37</sup>

### 34. January 20, 2022: Kampot

Los Seng, the publisher of Los Seng News, was placed under court supervision for six months over a live video report by two staff members in Kampot province.

The two reporters were arrested for covering a protest outside the Kampot provincial hall against the arrests of residents involved in a land dispute. Information Minister Khieu Kanharith also spoke in November against the arrests, saying, “If [journalists] take pictures in front of the provincial hall, why not let them take pictures?”

“Arresting them is wrong, it is arbitrary. So, our administration is also abusive,” he added.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Statement, “CambolJA condemns Authorities’ Threats and Harassment of Journalists This Afternoon,” CambolJA, March 11, <https://bit.ly/3YD3F9I>

<sup>35</sup> Summoned Letter by the Provincial Court of Odar Meanchey province <https://bit.ly/3Had2ac>

<sup>36</sup> Chhaya Neat, “Police officer Morn Soheat called and complained CPC News article,” February 22, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3vUJqqT>

<sup>37</sup> Admin, “Journalist Covering Labor Strike Threatened with Arrest in Phnom Penh,” CCIM, February 10, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3hLiwHq>

<sup>38</sup> Khut Sokun, “News Publisher Put Under Court Supervision Over Land Dispute Broadcast,” VOD, January 21, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3tATVod>



### 35. January 19, 2022: Phnom Penh

Two journalists from Cambodian Express News (CEN) said they received a death threat from a dog owner after they livestreamed a conflict between the dog owner and a person who was bitten by his dog.

The CEN journalists were afraid of this threat and recorded the voice of the dog's owner for evidence in case something happens to them in the future.<sup>39</sup>

### 36. January 10, 2022: Battambang

Sok Saran, 50, a reporter for "Kampuchea Roal Thnagay News" based in Battambang province, was arrested on 9 January 2022 by the Battambang provincial court on a charge of inciting the community to protest against the local authority in a flooded area. He was released on 9 July 2022 after the provincial court found that he had not committed any mistake.<sup>40</sup>

### 37. January 06, 2022: Kampong Chhnang

Five online journalists were arrested by the Kampong Chhnang police on 6 and 7 January 2022 for allegedly inciting people to protest against authorities.

Those five journalists included Keo Hour of SBT news, Prak Songha, Chhon Kongdara, Sang Chanthon, and Ouk Parady of MCTV. All five were charged with incitement to commit a felony.

Chan Kunthy, 51, the wife of Sang Chanthon, said the arrests were made after her husband and his colleagues covered a land dispute in Kampong Leng district. They were released on 27 July 2022.<sup>41</sup>

### 38. January 04, 2022: Phnom Penh

VOD, EAC, and GN time were not allowed to attend a press conference on the arrest of NagaWorld staff on the morning of 4 January 2022, held by the Phnom Penh Municipal authority.

The director of media at the Cambodian Center for Independent Media, Ith Sothoeut, said banning journalists from covering press conferences under the pretext of not registering was a restriction on press freedom.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cambodian Express News, January 19, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3WfVAWB>

<sup>40</sup> Pen SreyNeath, "Authorities implement arrest warrant for a news agency for inciting people to protest the flooded forest," CEN, January 11, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3PFGabK>

<sup>41</sup> CamboJA, "Quarterly Monitoring Report Jan-Mar 2022," 28 April 2022, <https://bit.ly/3v4xWQY>

<sup>42</sup> Mech Dara/Seng Thai, "Some media outlets were not allowed to cover the press conference regarding the arrest of NagaWorld strikers," VOD, January 04, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3Wc87ul>



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