

Press Release

Rise in legal threats and actions against journalists in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, March 20, 2024 – CamboJA's 2023 annual monitoring report on the journalism situation in Cambodia reveals a troubling trend, which indicates an increase in legal action or threats against journalists.

We recorded 32 cases of harassment against approximately 59 journalists, six of them women journalists. Although harassment cases fell 8.6% from 2022, the number of journalists who experienced abuse rose 9.3% year-on-year.

In comparison to 2022, legal threats increased 114%, sparking concerns about the shrinking space for press freedom in the country. The report also showed 15 cases of legal intimidation against journalists in 2023, double the number recorded in 2022, which includes lawsuits, legal threats and summonses.

In addition, at least five journalists were sued and charged, resulting in imprisonment or detention. This chilling outcome not only impacts journalists directly but also restricts the entire media landscape.

"We insist that journalists be given the freedom to do their job, inform the public and hold the powerful accountable without fear of physical threats or legal harassment," said Nop Vy, executive director of CamboJA.

Criminal prosecution should seldom be used against journalists. Unfortunately, threats of legal action have become common. This could lead to silencing journalists and encourage self-censorship.

Thus, we call on the government and relevant authorities to:

- Refrain from bringing criminal charges against journalists.
- End impunity by promptly investigating, prosecuting and addressing cases of violence against journalists.

- Immediately drop unfounded charges and review criminal convictions against journalists.
- Amend the Criminal Code to align with international freedom of expression standards.
- Repeal the Ministry of Information prakas, which authorizes the government to revoke media licenses without a judicial process, as it violates press freedom principles and Article 41 of the Cambodian Constitution.
- Repeal Inter-ministerial Prakas No. 170 used by the government to revoke media licenses without a court decision, and which orders ISPs to block sites.

CamboJA stands in solidarity with journalists in Cambodia and will continue to advocate for their safety as well as preserve press freedom.

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Read the full report here: <https://www.camboja.net/cambodian-journalism-situation-report-2023/>