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Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association



Cambodian Journalism Situation Report 2024

An annual record of reported harassment cases
against journalists

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I. Executive summary

This annual situation report, the fifth published by CamboJA since our launch, covers the first calendar year since Prime Minister Hun Manet took over for his father, representing a new generation of Cambodian leaders.

This government is off to a troubling start in its protection of journalists and their constitutional rights. The past year marked another slide for press freedom in Cambodia, including two incidents that made global news.

The most shocking attack on a journalist in 2024 was the killing of Chhoeung Chheng, a veteran environmental reporter who was shot in the abdomen by an assailant on December 4. It marked the first killing of a journalist in Cambodia since 2014, when Taing Try was killed while also reporting on illegal logging.

The arrest of award-winning journalist Mech Dara on Sept. 30 drew rebuke from local and international civil society groups, media organizations and foreign governments. He was released less than a month later, but still faces charges of “incitement to provoke social chaos” over social media posts.

CamboJA also investigated the case of a journalist in Mondulhiri whose official cause of death, a traffic accident, has been questioned by his colleagues as suspicious.

These high-profile cases point to a broader pattern of worsening harassment of journalists in Cambodia.

In 2024, we recorded 41 cases of harassment against at least 64 journalists, including two women. Of these, 28 cases were instances of legal harassment, compared to 15 such cases in 2023.

This marks a 28% increase in total reported cases compared to 2023, when there were 32 cases of harassment involving 59 journalists, and an 87% increase in cases of legal harassment.

While these numbers are cause for concern, we caution against drawing firm conclusions from the data, as CamboJA’s accounting is inherently incomplete. Some cases are brushed under the rug, and some journalists are understandably afraid to report for fear of further reprisal.

We also note that at least five journalists were charged and spent time in prison in 2024, while others were arbitrarily detained for questioning by police or courts.

As in past years, most of the harassment and intimidation was carried out by state actors, such as military officers, governors and local authorities, and most often related to environmental disputes or other alleged abuses of power and corruption.

Perhaps the most significant development in the ruling party's approach to the media sector was the launch of the Charter for Professional Journalism by the Ministry of Information, which ostensibly aims to counter "fake news" and promote ethics in journalism.

Journalism groups and United Nations experts have criticized the effort for lacking comprehensive consultations and proper remedies for when the media makes factual errors.

Criminal prosecution of journalists is becoming more common. The Criminal Code should be used against journalists only if recourse within Cambodia's press law has been exhausted. We believe threats of imprisonment and detention are draconian tactics used to quiet journalists and encourage self-censorship.

The ministry also released its own report on Cambodia's journalism situation in April, which claimed that 80% of the 341 journalists surveyed said the press freedom in Cambodia is "good" or "very good."

Reporters Without Borders came to a different conclusion. Its World Press Freedom Index ranked Cambodia 151 out of 180 countries, down from 147 in 2023.

Article 41 of Cambodia's Constitution says citizens are guaranteed "freedom of expression of their ideas, freedom of information, freedom of publication and freedom of assembly."

Cambodia is far off from making this a reality, but CamboJA is committed to put a spotlight on the situation for journalists in this country – for better or worse. We believe our country will be better off if its people can express themselves without fear, and journalists can do their jobs safely.

II. Introduction

CamboJA's annual report on the journalism situation in Cambodia is part of our ongoing efforts to monitor and advocate for press freedom in Cambodia. Journalists should be free to do their jobs, informing voters and holding powerful to account, without fear of physical threats or legal harassment.

For the fifth year running, this report shows that journalists have good reason to fear for their careers, freedom, safety and, in extreme cases, their lives – especially when they report on sensitive subjects connected to powerful people and entities.

Journalists remain subject to harassment, intimidation, discrimination, legal actions, and detention simply for asking questions or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And these journalists are far more likely to face prosecution than the perpetrators of this harassment.

As with the broader state of democracy in Cambodia, press freedom is at a low point in modern Cambodia.

In the past decade, many of the country's most respected news outlets have closed down or scaled back critical coverage of the government. The most recent example was Voice of Democracy, which then Prime Minister Hun Sen shut down in 2023 after complaining about a story.

CamboJA was hopeful that a new generation of leaders under Hun Manet would take concrete steps to protect journalists, as recommended by CamboJA and like-minded media watchdogs.

While the new prime minister has talked about modernizing the media sector, most of the changes so far reflect a desire to increase state control over the media. And there is growing concern that the government's limited tolerance for dissent will lead to expanding censorship and discrimination against independent media outlets and journalists.

Our monitoring bolsters concerns about journalist safety, due to legal risks, state surveillance, and physical threats to journalists, particularly those covering sensitive topics.

Additionally, the Ministry of Information appears to be increasingly selective about who gets a press card, at the same time that some authorities refuse to speak with journalists with an expired press card. This has been a particular problem for freelance journalists.

According to an investigation from [CamboJA News](#)¹ published in July, “strategic, systematic operations” have been set up to attack Khmer-language media outlets – some operating in the country and others in exile – that publish reports and commentary critical of Cambodia’s government.

CamboJA and our members welcome discussions about the future of the media sector in Cambodia, and how to balance the competing demands of misinformation, national security and the public’s right to know. But journalists must be part of this conversation.

We appreciate efforts by the Information Ministry and other stakeholders to increase opportunities for journalistic training to improve the skills and prospects of those working in the media space. And our laws that can be strengthened and improved to reflect today’s environment, without eroding protections for journalists.

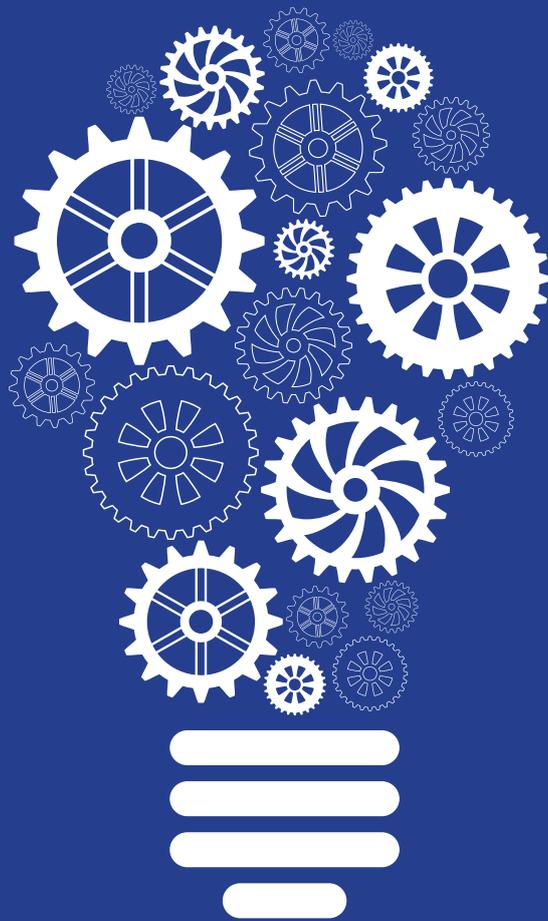
New policies should be geared toward protecting the crucial role of journalism in a democracy, not toward protecting the reputations of those in power.

¹ <https://cambojanews.com/strategic-systematic-operations-set-up-to-attack-independent-media/>

CamboJA's recommendations to the government and other stakeholders are as follow:

- 1.** Refrain from bringing criminal charges against journalists and citizen journalists in relation to their journalistic work.
- 2.** End impunity by promptly investigating, prosecuting and redressing cases of violence against journalists and human rights defenders.
- 3.** Provide dedicated support, training and resources to units tasked with investigating crimes against journalists, including on investigating such crimes in a gender-sensitive manner.
- 4.** Immediately drop pending charges and review criminal sentences against journalists and human rights defenders and investigate cases of violence against these groups.
- 5.** Develop and implement training initiatives for law enforcement authorities on respecting the rights of journalists to report and record at protests and other public events.
- 6.** Enact a broadcasting law that establishes an independent broadcasting authority and clear and neutral rules for the allocating broadcasting licenses, in line with international standards.
- 7.** Enact an access to information law that aligns with international standards in 2025.
- 8.** Amend the Criminal Code to align with international freedom of expression standards, including to repeal or amend the incitement crimes (Art. 494, 495) and to repeal the lèse majesté offense (Art. 437-bis), public defamation (Art. 305) and public insult (Art. 307).
- 9.** Amend the Press Law to align with international standards, establish clear rules around press accreditation and press registration, and refrain from requiring online media licences.
- 10.** Establish a meaningful consultation process with media and other stakeholders to ensure the press law amendment is aligned with international human rights standards.
- 11.** Hold meaningful consultations on draft laws which impact freedom of expression to allow civil society to provide inputs and to ensure alignment with the U.N.'s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the draft laws related to cybercrime, cybersecurity, and personal data protection.
- 12.** Repeal the Ministry of Information Prakas that authorizes the government to revoke media licenses without judicial processes, violating press freedom principles and article 41 of the Cambodian constitution.

- 13.** Repeal the Inter-ministerial Prakas No. 170 used to revoke media licenses without court decision as well as grant the government power to order ISPs to block sites, and the sub-decrees on domain name registration, mandatory SIM card registration and the national internet gateway.
- 14.** Place clear limits on the power of authorities to engage in surveillance and to block Internet sites without a court order and revise the Telecommunications Law to align with international standards.
- 15.** Increase internet access to citizens to ensure all Cambodians can receive news online. This could be done by:
 - Ensuring equal access by marginalised groups of people, including women, people with disabilities, and ethnolinguistic minorities.
 - Incentivising the telecommunications sector to provide low-cost options in both urban and rural areas through tax breaks, subsidies, or similar schemes.
 - Expanding mobile services in rural areas, accompanied by credits or subsidies to citizens who are unable to afford personal internet use or devices.
 - Setting up community internet centres as places where the internet and computers are free for community members to use or come at a low cost.
- 16.** Increase digital literacy education both in formal education settings such as schools and universities as well as in informal education settings. The aim is for Cambodians to be able to discern good sources of information from the bad as well as to be able to evaluate the news they receive.



III. Methodology

1. Method and 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 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 the journalists involved denied the accusations or charges. In cases involving journalists accused of extortion, CamboJA counted them as harassment if it found evidence a threat or attempt to intimidate in order to impair freedom of the press.

As a member of the regional coalition launched in December 2022 to jointly monitor attacks on news media in Southeast Asia (mainly Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor Leste, and Thailand), our monitoring framework was adapted in early 2023 for consistency, tracking journalists' safety issues based on three main dimensions — physical, digital, and legal safety.

We also document actions that may potentially harm, intimidate, obstruct, or silence media workers due to their journalistic roles without legal or legitimate justification, or prevent press institutions or media workers from carrying out their journalistic duties in a safe and independent manner, as well as any broader developments that may impact press freedom in Cambodia.

Due to the safety and security concerns, names of affected journalists and other sources have been withheld from this report if not published widely elsewhere.

2. Scope and limitations

This report has some limitations and gaps. It does not necessarily include all harassment cases against journalists in 2024 but only reported cases from January-December 2024 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. Another challenge is CamboJA's inability to contact affected journalists and family members in some cases.

3. For the purpose of this monitoring, some key terms used in this report are defined as follows:

'Journalists' includes media workers such as reporters, freelancers, photojournalists, support staff and fixers, those who hold press cards from the Ministry of Information or ID cards from their own outlets, those active in community media, and so-called citizen journalists. It does not include social media users without any of these professional credentials.

Legal harassment covers the legal or judicial actions/threats against journalists, including complaints, charges, imprisonment (placed in jail for pre-trial detention on specific charges or imprisoned after conviction), detention (detained for questioning for a few hours or overnight, but not charged and imprisoned), media license suspension/revocation, interrogation, summons for questioning and/or arrest, and other actions involving using legal tools to silence journalists and media outlets.

Physical harassment covers incidents of physical assault, attacks on equipment and personal belongings/other property, detention without legal process, sexual harassment, physical intimidation, and other incidents involving action that is physical in nature or intended to cause physical harm.

Digital harassment covers incidents of online bullying, trolling, online intimidation, online sexual harassment, internet blackouts, hacking, DDoS attack, doxxing of journalists and disinformation targeting media members or outlets.

Restriction/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. This also covers cases in which authorities have issued non-legal warnings or ordered journalists to leave an area in an attempt to prevent information from being published, or improperly blocked journalists from accessing information.



IV. Key Findings

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

CamboJA recorded 41 cases of harassment against at least 64 journalists in 2024. The most frequent type of harassment experienced was legal, of which Camboja counted 28 incidents, this included legal actions, license revocations, arrests, imprisonment and threats of legal action.

During the period from January to December 2024, Camboja was aware of 5 journalists who were placed in pretrial detention and/or sentenced in relation to their work.

CamboJA also recorded 6 cases of physical harassment, including attacks on equipment and personal belongings, and the killing of Chhoeung Chheng, a journalist working with Kampuchea Aphiwat news website in Siem Reap province.

Additionally, 7 cases of discrimination or intimidation were recorded, in which reporters were intentionally made to feel endangered or unwelcome in places where they had a right to work. We recorded at least 3 media licenses being revoked.

This year, reporting on controversial topics like deforestation and environmental issues (16 cases) were most often linked to cases of harassment, followed by land disputes (7 cases).

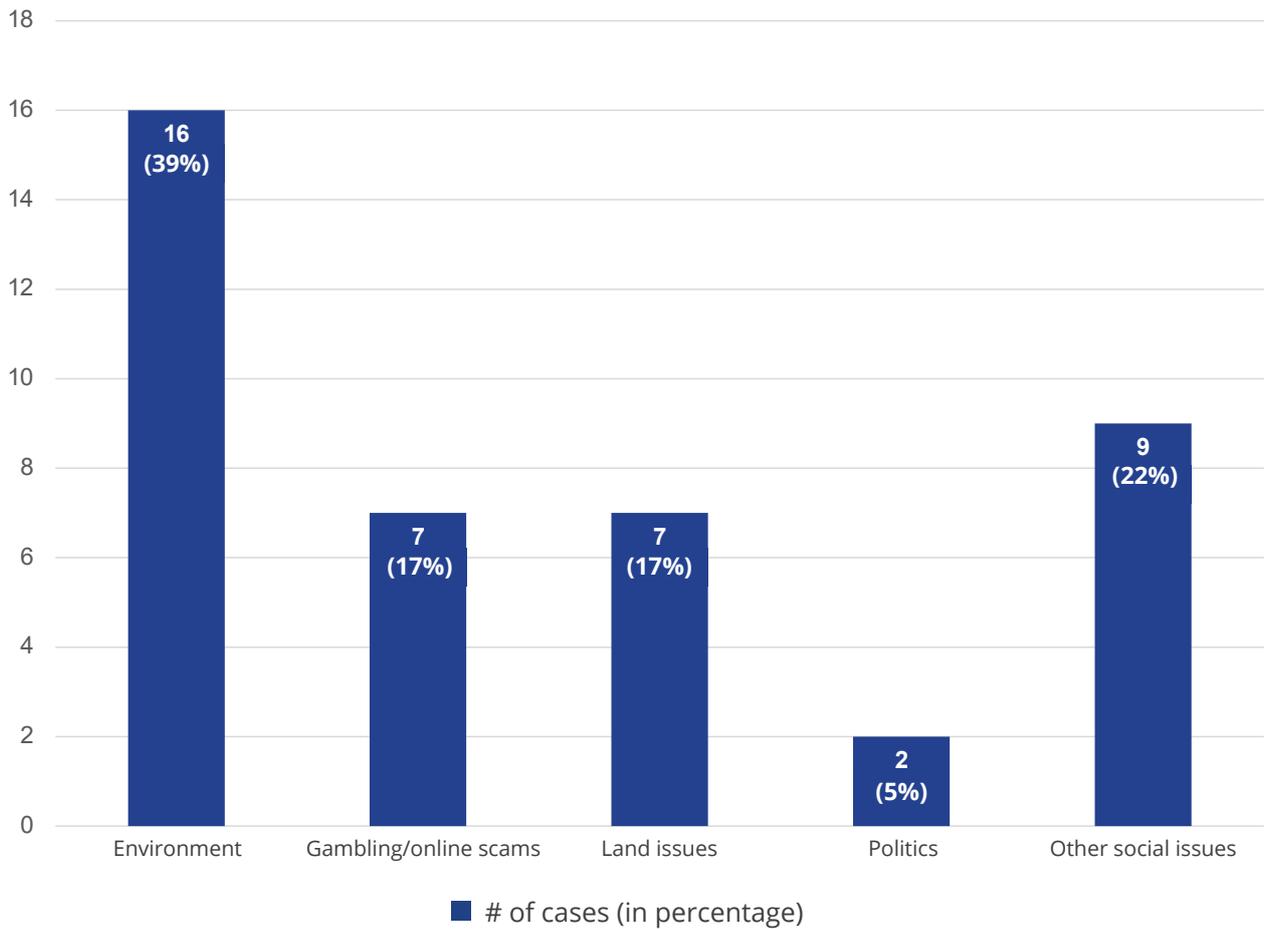
Most of the incidents recorded in 2024 were carried out by state actors, accounted to up to 26 cases, most often linked to environmental issues.

a. The topics reported and actors involved

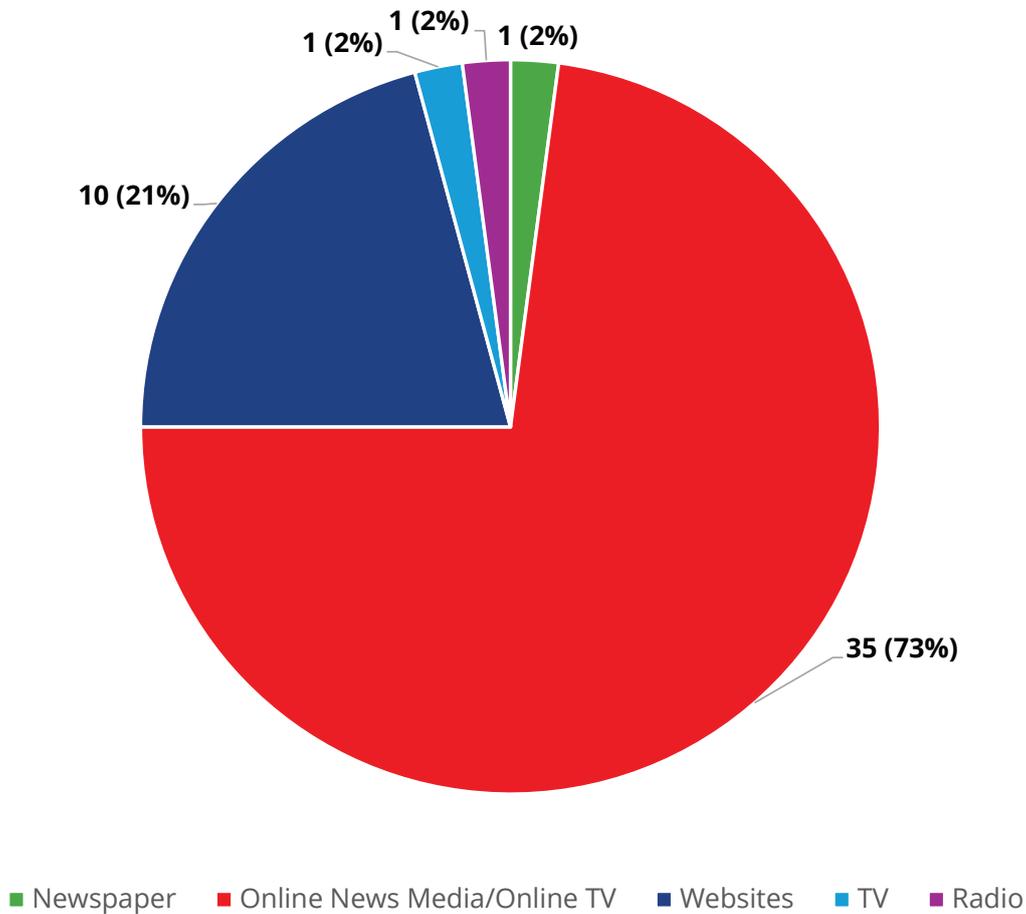
Overall, cases of harassment were most often linked to coverage of deforestation and environmental issues, followed by land disputes and gambling/online scams.

Online journalists, especially those based on Facebook, were more likely to face harassment than reporters working at traditional outlets like newspapers and television/radio stations.

Most of the harassment and intimidation was carried out by state actors, such as military officers, governors and local authorities. In many of these cases, journalists were charged with incitement and/or defamation related to reporting that impacted the reputation of authorities and others in positions of power.

Chart 1: Topics reported**Table 1: Indicate actors involved**

Actors	# of cases	# of affected journalists	In percentage
State actor	26	44	64%
Non-state actor (Company)	5	8	12%
Non-state actor (Individual)	10	13	24%

Chart 2: Type of media affected

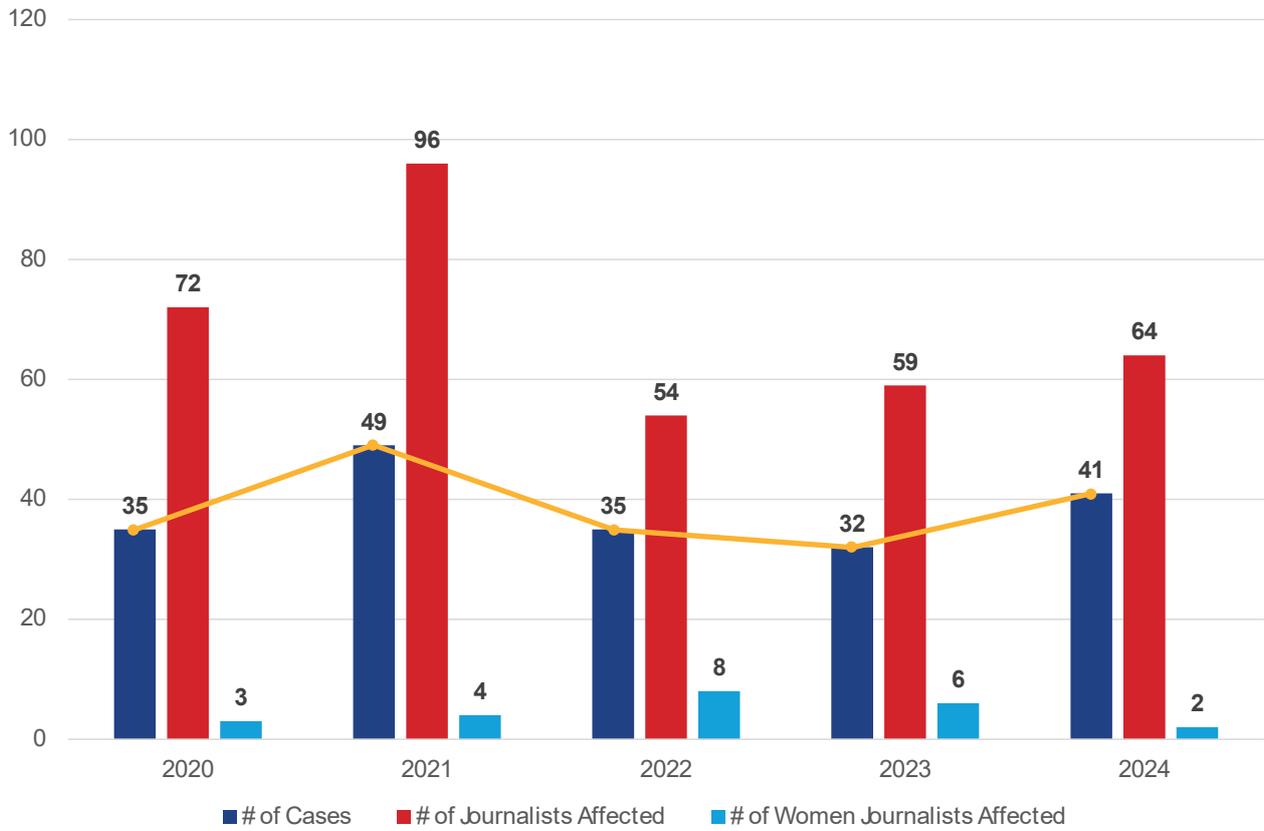
b. Number of harassment cases recorded by years

In the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, CamboJA documented a total of 192 incidents of harassment of journalists, affecting at least 345 journalists and media workers (23 were women journalists or 7%).

During this time, there has been a fluctuating but consistently concerning trend in the harassment of journalists in Cambodia.

In 2020, 35 cases of harassment affected 72 journalists. The following year, 2021, saw 49 cases with 96 journalists impacted. There was a notable decline in 2022, with 35 cases affecting 54 journalists. In 2023, 32 cases were reported, affecting 59 journalists. And now 2024 shows a jump back up to 41 cases of harassment, impacting 64 journalists.

The number of women impacted has fluctuated between 2 in 2024 to 8 in 2022. While accounting for a fraction of the cases, it remains important to address the unique challenges faced by female reporters, who continue to be targeted in these incidents.

Chart 3: Indicate cases recorded by year (2020-2024)

c. Location of harassment cases

The most frequent location for incidents in 2024 was Phnom Penh, followed by Mondulkiri and Kandal province, accounting 8 cases 4, cases.

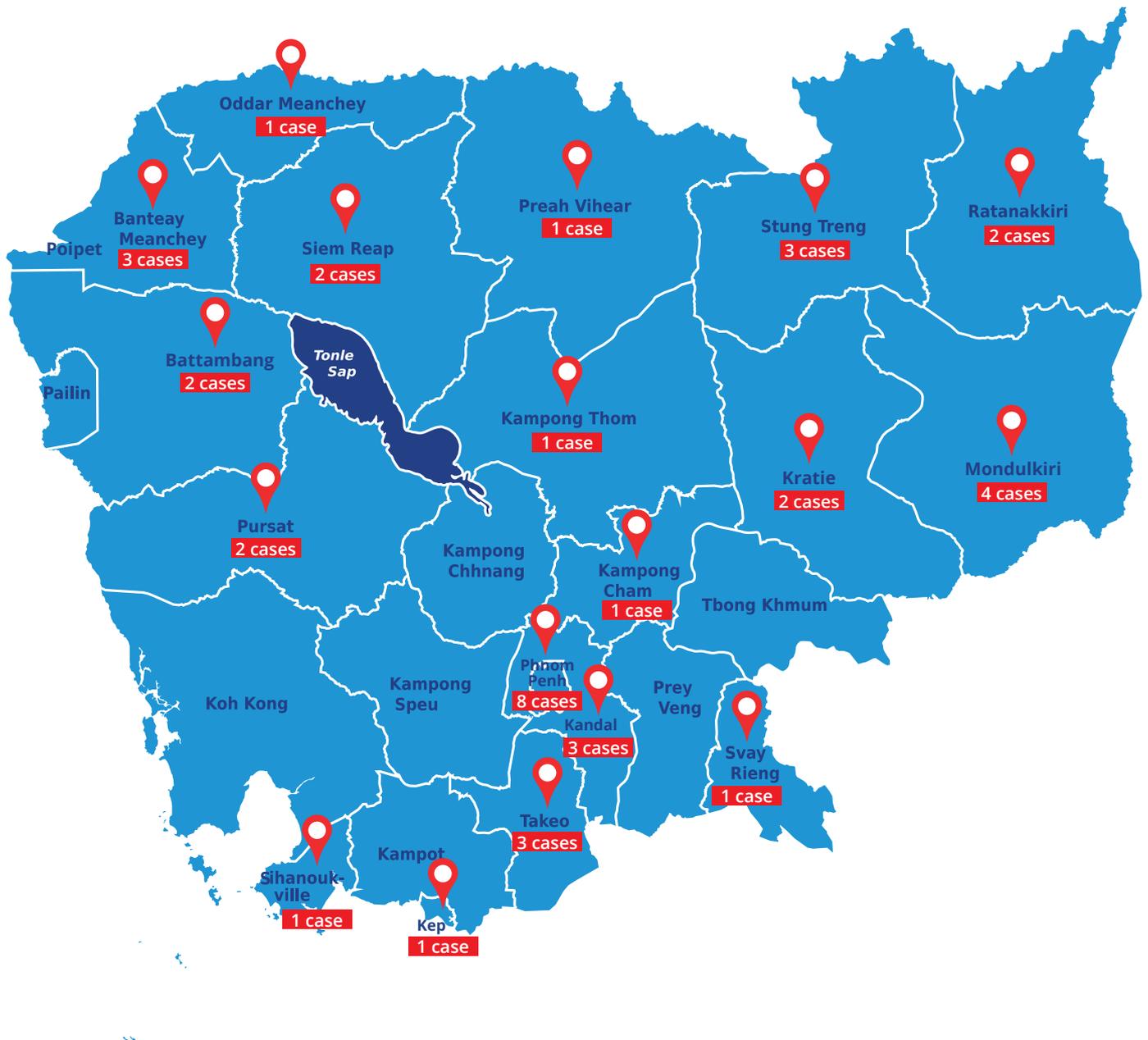


Table 2: Indicate by provinces/city

City/province	# of cases	In percentage
Phnom Penh	8	20%
Mondulkiri	4	10%
Kandal	3	7%
Stung Treng	3	7%
Takeo	3	7%
Banteay Meanchey	3	7%
Battambang	2	5%
Kratie	2	5%
Pursat	2	5%
Kratie	2	5%
Siem Reap	2	5%
Rattanakiri	2	5%
Preah Vihear	1	2%
Svay Rieng	1	2%
Kampong Cham	1	2%
Preah Sihanouk	1	2%
Kampong Thom	1	2%
Oddor Meanchey	1	2%
Kep	1	2%
Total	41	

d. Journalists imprisoned/detained

During the period from January to December 2024, CamboJA was aware of five journalists who were imprisoned in relation to their work. Three journalists were released on bail (two journalists were sentenced) and two remain in pretrial detention.

Between May and December 2024, several journalists faced legal charges, with many detained or at risk of imprisonment.

- **Soeu Sochea**, a journalist with HPN News in Kampong Thom, was charged with incitement to discrimination and imprisoned from May 24 to November 8, 2024.
- **Ry Rithya** from GG TV Net in Kandal was charged with incitement to commit a felony and detained from July 6 to August 14, 2024.
- **Mech Dara**, a freelance journalist in Phnom Penh, faced charges of incitement to disturb social security due to posts on social media, spending almost a month in prison, from September 30 to October 24, 2024.
- **Two journalists** from SSB TV News in Kandal, So Sambo and Noeub Bun, were charged with blackmail and arrested on December 15, 2024. They both remained in prison as of the end of the year.

Table 3: Indicate journalists spent time in prison

Name of the Affected Journalist	Institution	Location	Date of arrest	Date of release	Charge
Soeu Sochea	HPN News	Kampong Thom	24 May 2024	8 November 2024	Incitement to discrimination under Article 496 of the Criminal Code
Ry Rithtya	GG TV Net	Kandal	6 July 2024	14 August 2024	Incitement to commit felony under Article 494 and 495 of the Criminal Code, and Article 10 of the Press Law.
Mech Dara	Freelance	Phnom Penh	30 September 2024	24 October 2024	Incitement to disturb social security over social media posts.
So Sambo	SSB TV News	Kandal	15 December 2024	Remained in prison	Blackmail under Article 372 and 373 of Criminal Code
Noeub Bun	SSB TV News	Kandal	15 December 2024	Remained in prison	Blackmail under Article 372 and 373 of Criminal Code

e. Journalists killed/died

Journalist Chhoeung Chheng in Siem Reap was shot on the job and died from his wounds. It was the first murder of a journalist in Cambodia since 2014, when Taing Try was killed while also reporting on illegal logging.

CamboJA has also investigated the death of journalist in Mondulhiri who, according to officials, was killed traffic accident while driving motor on the way back home. His colleagues have raised suspicions about the circumstances of the accident.

Table 4: Indicate journalists killed

Name of victims	Institution	City/province	Date of incident	Cause of incident
Chhoeung Chheng	Kampuch Aphiwat News	Siem Reap	He was shot on December 4, 2024, and died on December 7	The journalist was shot in the abdomen by an assailant as he was travelling in Chi Kraeng district to report on a forest crime in a forest conservation area.
Srorn Ravann,	CPN News	Mondulkiri	The journalist went missing on June 1 and his body was found two weeks later, on June 14	Died of traffic accident. Police claimed that he died in a traffic accident on the curved road. A picture shared with CamboJA by group of journalists showed the body laying on the bank of canal, with his motorbike on top.

2. Safety dimension

The harassments type has been broken down into three major dimensions (legal, digital, physical), as well as restrictions and intimidation targeting journalists.

Legal threats accounted for 68% of the cases, with 28 instances affecting 45 journalists. Physical safety concerns came in second, with 6 cases affecting 9 journalists, representing 15% of the total incidents.

Journalists from at least 32 different online media outlets were subject to often dubious legal accusations in 2024, including being summoned to court, having media licenses revoked, facing legal threats, being charged, detained for questioning or placed in detention.

At least 10 journalists were arrested and detained at police stations for questioning while eight journalists were summoned/questioned by courts and police.

This year, we recorded 6 cases of physical violence. In the most egregious case, a journalist in Siem Reap province was killed. Others journalists reported being physically assaulted or having their equipment damaged.

We recorded 11 journalists, including two women journalists, faced improper restrictions or discrimination while doing their work. At least 3 journalists were not permitted into the courtroom for a hearing involving Kem Sokha, a former leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, even though they secured pre-registration.

While CamboJA did not record any individual cases of digital harrasment, an investigation by CamboJA News found an insidious online campaign to attack independent media outlets on Facebook, where many Cambodians get their news.

Table 5: Breaks down the 41 reported harassment cases by dimensions.

Safety Dimension	# of cases	# of affected journalists	In percentage
Legal Safety	28	45	68%
Digital Safety	0	0	0%
Physical Safety	6	9	15%
Others	7	10	17%
Total	41	64	

Trend of legal threats recorded by Year

In the period from 2020-2024, CamboJA observed that legal threats were the most frequently used tool to restrict journalists. In 2020, we recorded 24 cases of legal threats, then 31 cases in 2021, 16 cases in 2022, 15 in 2023, and now a jump back up to 28 cases in 2024.

Table 6: Indicated trend of safety dimension recorded by Year

Type of threats	# of cases 2020	# of cases 2021	# of cases 2022	# of cases 2023	# of cases 2024	Total
Legal Harassments	24	31	16	15	28	114
Digital Harassments	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	0	5
Physical Harassments	11	18	4	3	6	42
Others	N/A	N/A	15	9	7	31

V. Case reports

1. Journalist killed in traffic accident

Background

Srorn Ravann, a reporter for online CPN news, was one of three online journalists in Mondulkiri who was arrested in October 2023 on charges of extorting a Chinese mining firm in Keo Seima district. He was placed pretrial detention for six months and released on bail in March 2024.

On June 14, 2024, he was found dead in a canal alongside a street in the province, after going missing two weeks prior.

Provincial police said Rovanna drunkenly drove off the road, leading to his accidental death.

However, his colleagues have raised questions about the case, and his relatives said police refused to give back his phone, which was eventually burned along with his body.

On the morning of June 1, 33-year-old Ravann left his home in Mondulkiri province's Dakdam district to visit friends in Koh Nehk district.

The next day, one of the friends he visited received a phone call from Ravann's wife, who told him that her husband did not return home.

Savann's body was found almost two weeks later, in the morning of June 14, in a canal alongside National Road 76. The body was reported discovered by a worker cutting grass.

Authorities [claimed](#)² that he died in a traffic accident on the curved road.

The body was burned at the crematorium nearby where the accident happened. The relatives said police did not return his phone and burned it with the body.

² <https://mekong-news.com/socialite/2024/06/14/1089/>

A group of journalists shared their skepticism about the official cause of death in a Telegram group chat that was shared with CamboJA. They also raised concern about their safety and advised each other to be careful when traveling.

“I still don’t believe he... died like this as he knew the condition of the road well, he drove almost every day on that road,” said one [journalist](#)³.

“The road he returned from Koh Nheaek is going uphill, it could not cause death. But I can’t say anything against police reports,” said another.

Not secure mekong-news.com/socialite/2024/06/14/1089/

ប្រពន្ធយំបោកខ្លួនពេលរកឃើញសពប្តី

មណ្ឌលគីរី: កម្មករកាត់ស្មៅបានប្រទះឃើញសាកសពមានសភាពស្នាយលួយនៅក្នុងប្រឡាយចិញ្ចឹមផ្លូវជាតិលេខ៧៦ ចំណុចប៉ានាដុតសពកូរ៉ែជិតភ្នំបាយនៅ ក្នុងសង្កាត់រមនាក្រុងសែនមនោរម កាលពីព្រឹកថ្ងៃទី១៤ ខែមិថុនា ឆ្នាំ២០២៤។

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តាមសាច់ញាតិ បានឲ្យដឹងថា ជនរងគ្រោះ បានចេញពីផ្ទះនៅឃុំជាក់ដាំ ស្រុកអូររាំង ដោយប្រាប់ប្រពន្ធថា ទៅយកព័ត៌មាននៅស្រុកកោះព្រែក តាំងពីថ្ងៃទី១ ខែមិថុនា មកម្ល៉េះ ហើយបាត់ដំណឹងតែម្តងទើបរកឃើញនៅពេលនេះ។

Screenshot of a relative at the accident site where the victim, a journalist, was found dead on June 14, 2024

³ <https://www.camboja.net/advocacy/reports/quarterly-report/quarterly-monitoring-report-on-journalism-situation-in-cambodia-july-september-2024/>

2. Journalist killed by gun shot

Chhoeung Chheng, a Siem Reap-based journalist with online media Kampuchea Aphivath, died three days after sustaining injuries from a gun attack.

The 63-year-old was shot in the abdomen by an assailant on December 4 as he was travelling in Chi Kraeng district in Siem Reap province to report on a forest crime in a conservation area.

According to a journalist who witnessed the incident, Chheng was about 40 meters ahead of him when he was shot, resulting in critical injuries.

He was first taken to a commune health center around 8pm but two hours later he was transferred to the Siem Reap provincial hospital, where he underwent surgery on December 5. Chheng succumbed to his injuries on the night of December 7.

The authorities released a statement stating that a suspect had been apprehended, and allegedly confessed to the shooting of Chheng over a personal conflict.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on December 8 called on Cambodian authorities to ensure that all parties responsible for the attack are severely punished, and urged the Cambodian government to take concrete actions to end violence against journalists.



Chhoeung Chheng, a journalist with the online media outlet Kampuchea Aphivath in Siem Reap, died from a gunshot.(Facebook)

3. Women journalists and challenges

“Bopha” is the name given to CamboJA by an online journalist in Battambang province, who says she experienced discrimination and harassment as a woman journalist.

She went into journalism in 2020 and currently works as a news reporter for ASEAN Daily News with a recording studio set up in her house.

Before becoming a journalist, she reported on issues in her community in Koas Kralar district in Battambang, but faced repeated warnings from local authorities.

“When I wanted to take photos to post on social media, they would tell me that I had no capacity to do that [because I was not] a journalist,” she said, adding that she then decided to learn about journalism. “Later, someone asked me to be a journalist.”

Bopha did not receive any training on journalism or news writing when she first started reporting live on Facebook.

“I first made a living reporting at a gambling venue. They [gamblers] wanted to [hurt] me. At the time, I just started the job, so I didn’t know how to get information and secure protection,” she said.

In 2021, she underwent training on news reporting by advocacy-based NGO Alliance for Conflict Transformation in Phnom Penh. “I joined the training and [also learned] how to communicate with the community and authorities, and resolve disputes,” she said.

Bopha uses a smartphone to take photos and videos while reporting. The videos are edited with voiceovers in her studio. “In the digital era, having a smartphone can make you a journalist,” she said.

While reporting on land disputes, she said she was sued by the authorities. Currently, she reports positive issues for her own safety.

Bopha said as a woman journalist, she has experienced discrimination and sexual harassment by male journalists and government officials.



Women journalists interviewed president of trade union worker in Phnom Penh in 2025 (Pring Samrang)

"I interviewed a provincial officer, and he used inappropriate words, with sexual [references], and I was really upset. My husband told me to stop doing this job," she said. "I also experienced sexual harassment by male journalists while covering news on the field, who touch me intentionally."

However, she remains optimistic about her field. "I want all women journalists to be brave, strong and not hesitate to do this job even if you face challenges, such as harassment," she said.

Bopha is not the only woman journalist who experienced discrimination and harassment at work.

According to a study conducted by UNESCO, women journalists and media practitioners globally, including Cambodians, increasingly undergo offline and online attacks, and are subject to disproportional and specific threats.

The study concluded that 73% of women media staff experienced online violence.

In 2023, UNESCO and the Women's Media Centre launched a project to improve the [safety of women journalists](#)⁴ and strengthen freedom of expression in Cambodia.

Roeun Samnang, 38, who works for Say Poch News in Battambang province, shared similar challenges being a woman journalist. She said her family did not encourage her to work as a journalist due to the risks that go with the job.

"It's hard for me to ask for information from sources. They tell me that women should not work as journalists," she said.

Samnang had previously joined a training on journalism by the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM). There should be more opportunities for local journalists, especially women journalists, to build their capacity, she said.

She also asked local authorities to accept the duties of a journalist. "I want to see the authorities cooperate with journalists and media associations to promote and support women journalists when we face problems," she said.

Both Samnang and Bopha said they have yet to receive training on online and physical safety, for example.

Rann Sreydeth, a freelance journalist in Phnom Penh, who is studying journalism at the Department for Media and Communication (DMC), said her family did not encourage her to work as a journalist at first.

"They were worried about me and asked me to stop doing this work, especially when they saw me working with independent media," she said. "Because I love this job, I tried to explain and convince them about my work. I want to be a professional."

Sreydeth shared that she has been harassed during interviews with government officials.

"I called a state official to ask about a case of a journalist who was arrested, and the official asked me which one," she said. "At the time, I did not recall the journalist's identity. The official then said, 'Why don't you know how to work? [You] are stupid and still want to interview me?'"

⁴ <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/women-journo-safety-project-starts>



Woman journalist, Seoung Nimol interviewed indigenous people affected by carbon credit project in Thmar Dounpov commune, Thmar Bang district, Koh Kong province, on October 30, 2024. (Hel Komsan)

Sreydeth said the number of women journalists working for independent media is still small, as they are afraid of reporting on sensitive issues and face social and family objections.

“I think the issue of gender should not be a barrier to women from doing what they want. If women received support from their family, they would feel open. We can do what we want to do without much concern,” she said.

When it comes to issues like sexual harassment, only women can understand the problems, she added.

The exact number of women journalists in Cambodia is unclear.

In 2023, the [Ministry of Information](#)⁵ issued 269 press cards to women journalists, which was equivalent to 8.7% of the total issued. A [media report](#)⁶ in 2022, which quoted ministry data, mentioned that there were more than [470 women journalists](#)⁷ in Cambodia in 2021.

Chhan Sokunthea, executive director of CCIM, requested the Information Ministry provide “special protection” for women journalists, especially when they cover news in unsafe locations.

“When they report sensitive issues such as land disputes, they have to be on the field or go into the forest. If something happens, who is responsible for their safety?” she asked.

Hang Samphors, team leader of Cambodian Female Journalists, said the number of female journalists was small because challenges, such as sexual harassment, continue to exist online and offline.

“Safety and security of female journalists is not highly focused when they go on field trips and travel at night,” she said. “Online harassment commonly happens to women journalists and no action is taken by the authorities.”

Samphors said restrictions on press freedom is another factor limiting women’s participation in the media.

“The role of women journalists’ in decision-making should be promoted with more opportunities for capacity building and psychological support,” she said.

⁵ <https://moi-static.sgp1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/0Report-2024/Report on The State of Press Freedom in Cambodia FINAL.pdf>

⁶ <https://cambodianess.com/article/cambodian-women-journalists-on-the-rise>

⁷ <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/female-journos-share-woes-seek-improvements>

VI. General media landscape

Cambodia's press freedom ranking in 2024 dropped

According to the World Press Freedom Index from Reporters Without Borders, Cambodia ranked 151 out of 180 countries, down from 147 in 2023.

The country's overall score was down from 42 in 2023 to 34 in 2024. In Asia Pacific, RSF noted Cambodia placed higher than Vietnam and Myanmar.

"The main broadcasters and the few remaining newspapers generally toe the government line. Many subjects are impossible to cover, such as political opposition, corruption and deforestation," it said.

Cambodia's media pushes for independent oversight council

Cambodian journalism associations are calling for an independent press council—similar to those in other ASEAN countries—to strengthen ethical standards and improve safety for journalists.

During an October 31 conference titled "Trust in Cambodian News", UNESCO organized a panel with Cambodian journalists and media houses to mark the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists and discuss challenges facing the country's press corps.

"Strategic, systematic operations" target exiled media online

CamboJA News published an article revealing "strategic, systematic operations" set up to attack exiled media outlets, including VOD (Voice of Democracy) Khmer, Radio Free Asia (RFA) Khmer and The Cambodia Daily Khmer.

The social media accounts involved in the trolling campaign often showed images of people dressed in military uniforms or had been created in the past year or two. Media experts suggested the well-organized effort may be intended to help the ruling party. The targeted outlets regularly publish reports and commentary highly critical of Cambodia's government.

Based on research conducted by a local digital security expert, most of the comments involve the use of computer programs that automatically generate comments, combined with comments created by [humans copy-and-pasting](#)⁸.

Prime Minister Hun Manet provides recommendations on journalism

In a statement issued on December 10, 2024, ahead of the 21st Editors' Forum on December 21, Hun Manet said the achievements of the government are due to the active participation of media institutions and journalists.

He asserted the Royal Government will pay attention to upholding the right to freedom of the press and freedom of expression in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Press Law. He continued that the Cambodian government needs a powerful, responsible, and professional press and journalists who dare to speak the truth and criticize constructively to reflect the full reality of society and avoid spreading one-sided or fake news.

However, he also mentioned that the use of these rights to express opinions beyond the legal limits still occurs, which has caused harm to social order and negatively affected citizens.

He added that the right of expression, freedom of the press, and publication are fully guaranteed in accordance with Cambodian laws and regulations. Therefore, journalists must not use those rights to harm the dignity of others and to harm social customs, public order, and national security.

Digital advertising saw growth in 2024

Minister of Information Neth Pheaktra said [digital advertising](#)⁹ saw growth of over 200 percent in 2024 with a total \$170 million, even though the number of media outlets has decreased from over 2,000 to just over 1,000, largely due to financial challenges.

Speaking at the Second Media Development Conference on December 19, 2024, Pheaktra noted that in 2016, \$116 million was spent on advertising through traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazine. That number dropped to just \$80 million in 2024.

⁸ <https://cambojanews.com/strategic-systematic-operations-set-up-to-attack-independent-media/>

⁹ <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/digital-advertising-surg-ing-even-as-fewer-media-outlets-registered>

The minister warned the media outlets that fail to integrate into digital frameworks face closure, as the traditional platforms are being replaced by digital ones.

According to ministry of information, over 10,000 journalists are working in the country, with more than 8,000 holding ministry-issued identification cards in 2024. Among total of 3,201 press card issued in 2023, the [ministry](#) reported 269 were female journalists.

In 2024, the ministry issued 1,620 licenses to media entities, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines, websites, and online platforms, with 875 being online TV outlets.

Ministry introduced ‘Charter for Professional Journalism’

On August 6, the Ministry of Information officially launched Charter for Professional Journalism, after first making it public on July 24. United Nations experts called for its suspension.



Information Minister Neth Pheaktra speaks at a press conference to launch the Charter for Professional Journalism on August 6, 2024, a photo post on the Ministry of Information's Facebook.

“No comprehensive consultations were held as part of the process of developing the Charter and a few stakeholders were given only nine days to comment. Just four days after the deadline, the Charter was promulgated without the possibility of further discussion on the input by relevant parties,” the experts said.

The experts are also expressed concern over the broad scope of the charter, which is intended to be applied to individual journalists, media outlets, publishers, journalists’ associations, and those operating on social media platforms.

Experts noted that any professional media code should be drafted by and for the media rather than through a [ministry-led process](#)¹⁰.

Important independent media donor shuts down

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) completely closed their office in Cambodia by 2024, marking a reduction in foreign support for the media sector.

SIDA played a significant role in strengthening media freedom and supporting independent journalism in Cambodia, particularly in the early 2000s.

Through grants and capacity-building programs, SIDA helped to enhance the skills of Cambodian journalists, promote press freedom, and support civil society organizations advocating for free expression.

The reduction in financial support for independent media, combined with government crackdowns on critical media, has significantly weakened the impact of media development programs.

Rising concerns about cyber-related legislation

The Cambodian government is drafting legislation to address cybercrime, cybersecurity, and personal data protection, ostensibly aiming to create a secure digital environment.

However, these draft laws raise several concerns. Critics argue that the cybercrime and cybersecurity laws may overreach, potentially infringing on freedom of expression and access to information.

¹⁰ <https://cambojanews.com/un-calls-for-suspension-of-cambodias-journalism-charter-ministry-says-it-devalues-industrys-consensus/>

The draft data protection law, while necessary for safeguarding personal data, must align with international standards to ensure it effectively protects citizens' privacy without stifling innovation.

Government accepts some media-related feedback from UN

During Cambodia's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2024, members of the U.N.'s Human Rights Council expressed significant concern over the country's human rights situation, including freedom of expression.

A total of 275 recommendations were made, with a substantial number focusing on enhancing press freedom and protecting journalists. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) supported 20 of the recommendations it received pertaining to freedom of opinion and expression and access to information.

Those supported recommendations including:

- Strengthen efforts to prevent harassment and protect the rights of human rights defenders and journalists. (Czechia).
- Take all necessary measures for the free exercise of the freedom of expression by Journalists and the population in general and cease their persecution (Portugal)
- Guarantee the freedom of expression of citizens and journalists by revising the Criminal Code (France)
- Guarantee freedom of expression and independence of the media, particularly by repealing article 305 of the Criminal Code, amending the Law on the Press and adopting a law on access to information in line with international standards (Switzerland).
- Hold meaningful consultations with civil society on draft laws that affect freedom of expression, including the draft laws related to cybercrime, cybersecurity and personal data protection (Sweden).
- Strengthen civil society participation and freedom of expression by repealing decisions to block independent media websites and by conducting meaningful civil society consultation on proposed legislative changes (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

While the space for independent journalism in Cambodia keeps getting smaller, there are still hundreds of journalists working to keep it open, one story or broadcast at a time. CamboJA is proud to be part of this effort to keep our country's proud tradition of fearless journalism alive.

The fact that too many of our colleagues are facing harassment in the field means they are still going out there, putting their safety and security on the line to keep people informed.

The murder of Chhoeung Chheng and the arrest of Mech Dara highlight the worst dangers reporters encounter while pursuing critical stories.

Despite government assurances of upholding press freedom, actions such as media license revocations, strategic attacks on independent outlets, and difficulties in obtaining press credentials point to a tightening grip on journalistic expression.

The launch of the Charter for Professional Journalism, though framed as a step toward ethical reporting, seems to prioritize control over the media sector, rather than promoting or protecting journalistic independence.

A free and independent media is not just a fundamental right but a cornerstone of a democratic society.

This report bolsters the findings of other organizations that have described the worrying state of media today. The severity of the issue is reflected in Cambodia's falling position in the World Press Freedom Index, now in the bottom 20% globally.

One crucial top-line trend this year was the rise in cases of legal harassment against journalists, including media license revocations and threats of jailing.

While the government points to the number of media outlets as evidence of a healthy media sector, the space for fearless journalism that demands accountability from political leaders is shrinking.

For five years this report has served as an urgent reminder of the threats facing journalists, and the need for laws, policies and actions that ensure their protection. But that won't change without political will, which requires public participation and pressure.

We urge the Cambodian government to take meaningful steps to ensure that journalists can operate without fear of intimidation, violence, or legal repercussions.

Recommendations

We continue to call on the government and relevant authorities to promote press freedom and respect for journalists' professional obligations. More specifically, we urge the authorities and other stakeholders to:

1. Refrain from bringing criminal charges against journalists and citizen journalists in relation to their journalistic work.
2. End impunity by promptly investigating, prosecuting and redressing cases of violence against journalists and human rights defenders.
3. Provide dedicated support, training and resources to units tasked with investigating crimes against journalists, including on investigating such crimes in a gender-sensitive manner.
4. Immediately drop pending charges and review criminal sentences against journalists and human rights defenders and investigate cases of violence against these groups.
5. Develop and implement training initiatives for law enforcement authorities on respecting the rights of journalists to report and record at protests and other public events.
6. Enact a broadcasting law that establishes an independent broadcasting authority and clear and neutral rules for the allocating broadcasting licenses, in line with international standards.
7. Enact an access to information law that aligns with international standards in 2025.
8. Amend the Criminal Code to align with international freedom of expression standards, including to repeal or amend the incitement crimes (Art. 494, 495) and to repeal the *lèse majesté* offense (Art. 437-bis), public defamation (Art. 305) and public insult (Art. 307).

9. Amend the Press Law to align with international standards, establish clear rules around press accreditation and press registration, and refrain from requiring online media licences.
10. Establish a meaningful consultation process with media and other stakeholders to ensure the press law amendment is aligned with international human rights standards.
11. Hold meaningful consultations on draft laws which impact freedom of expression to allow civil society to provide inputs and to ensure alignment with the U.N.'s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the draft laws related to cybercrime, cybersecurity, and personal data protection.
12. Repeal the Ministry of Information Prakas that authorizes the government to revoke media licenses without judicial processes, violating press freedom principles and article 41 of the Cambodian constitution.
13. Repeal the Inter-ministerial Prakas No. 170 used to revoke media licenses without court decision as well as grant the government power to order ISPs to block sites, and the sub-decrees on domain name registration, mandatory SIM card registration and the national internet gateway.
14. Place clear limits on the power of authorities to engage in surveillance and to block Internet sites without a court order and revise the Telecommunications Law to align with international standards.
15. Increase internet access to citizens to ensure all Cambodians can receive news online. This could be done by:
 - Ensuring equal access by marginalised groups of people, including women, people with disabilities, and ethnolinguistic minorities.
 - Incentivising the telecommunications sector to provide low-cost options in both urban and rural areas through tax breaks, subsidies, or similar schemes.
 - Expanding mobile services in rural areas, accompanied by credits or subsidies to citizens who are unable to afford personal internet use or devices.
 - Setting up community internet centres as places where the internet and computers are free for community members to use or come at a low cost.
16. Increase digital literacy education both in formal education settings such as schools and universities as well as in informal education settings. The aim is for Cambodians to be able to discern good sources of information from the bad as well as to be able to evaluate the news they receive.

VIII. Annex:

Legal harassment

15 December 24, Kandal

Two online journalists from SSB TV News were charged with blackmail under Article 372 and 373 of Criminal Code by the Kandal provincial court and sent to pre-trial detention at Kandal provincial prison on December 17, 2024.

Initially, police said the journalists were arrested for extortion and forgery. The police did not mention who the complainant was in the case.

However, a screenshot posted by the Police Commissariat of Kandal on December 16 showed a two-way conversation via Telegram channel between a journalist and a person, named in Telegram as Veasna, who volunteered to give the journalist some money for [petroleum expenses](#)¹¹.

2 December 24, Battambang

A publisher at Banan Santepheap News was sued by the Banan district governor in Battambang province for public defamation after he reported on various social and environmental issues in the district.

Five court summonses were issued on December 2 by prosecutor Duong Saron, who ordered the journalist to appear in court for questioning related to five Facebook posts and reports between October and November.

On December 18, the journalist said he was questioned by the court about the information he [published in that period](#)¹².

28 November 24, Kampong Cham

The publisher of KH Plus News was summoned by the Kampong Cham provincial court over accusations of defaming the judiciary after the initial apology he made was not accepted.

¹¹ <https://pfmsea.org/two-journalists-kandal-charged-blackmail>

¹² <https://pfmsea.org/battambang-journalist-faces-five-defamation-lawsuits>

In the summons issued on November 28 and shared on December 2, prosecutor Toch Oudom ordered the publisher to appear in court on December 19.

According to the summons, the publisher allegedly insulted the judicial institution continuously, shared false information which discredited the court, and criticized judicial decisions on [land disputes](#)¹³.

27 November 24, Mondulkiri

A publisher at MD TV News in Mondulkiri was sued in the provincial court by Yu Chanty for allegedly committing public defamation based on two reports published on June 18 and 19.

On November 27, 2024, Mondulkiri provincial court prosecutor Hak Sieklim ordered the publisher to appear in court on December 26 for questioning following the lawsuit filed by Chanty, a former Koh Nhek district councilor accused of filling up a public canal illegally.

The publisher said on June 20, the Sen Monorom town administration acknowledged that the canal had been filled and ordered Chanty to clear the sand from the [canal](#)¹⁴.

23 November 24, Stung Treng

A freelance environmental journalist was arrested on November 23, 2024, and detained for questioning for two days by Stung Treng provincial authorities for entering an area, said to be prohibited, where illegal logging was allegedly happening.

The journalist was arrested with five other environmental activists who entered the site, believed to be operated by T.S.M.W Co Ltd in the Krala Pous mountain area in the Veun Sai-Siem Pang National Park in Stung Treng.

They were arrested by soldiers who were camping in the National Park area and sent to the provincial gendarmerie headquarters for [questioning](#)¹⁵.

¹³ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-summoned-court-public-defamation>

¹⁴ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-mondulkiri-sued-illegal-canal-filling-report>

¹⁵ <https://pfmsea.org/freelance-journalist-detained-after-entering-prohibited-area>

17 November 24, Kandal

Five online journalists from different media outlets were questioned by Kandal Provincial Police after reporting about an alleged illegal gambling operation in Sampeou Poun town in Kandal province.

VOD reported on November 19 that five journalists were arrested and detained for a day for questioning after they wrote about an illegal gambling operation.

The Police Commissariat of Kandal Province denied the journalists were arrested and detained, but said they were asked to give details relating to the [report](#)¹⁶.

5 November 24, Kep

An online journalist with the ICDTV media outlet in Kep Province was questioned by Kep Provincial Court following a complaint made by Sao Saroeun, who is said to be a military officer.

The journalist was sued for violation of privacy after his media outlet published reports on August 10 and 22 that Sao Saroeun, reportedly a business man, was allegedly involved in clearing and encroaching state-owned mountain land in Damnak Chang'aeur district in Kep.

A letter sent to Sao Saroeun by Damnak Chang'aeur district administration on September 10, 2024, informed him of his illegal occupation of a land measuring over 89,000 square meters, where he had built a concrete road, toilet and other infrastructure. The administration asked Saroeun to stop constructing other buildings and clearing more [land](#)¹⁷.

22 October 24, Takeo

A complaint against the publisher of Sunday TV Online and a reporter with Koh Santepheap Daily were submitted to the Ministry of Information after they reported an alleged corruption involving a powerful individual in Takeo province.

On October 24, 2024, the two journalists received a complaint made by a person known as Sot Vuth, who was mentioned in the report for being allegedly involved in corrupt practices related to paddy rice transportation at the Vietnam border in Takeo.

¹⁶ <https://pfmsea.org/five-journalists-questioned-reporting-gambling-operation>

¹⁷ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-sued-report-powerful-individual-involved-state-land-encroachment>

In the complaint, Vuth requested the Ministry of Information to take legal action against the individuals and publications, and have the media licenses revoked and demanded compensation of \$200,000 from the individuals.

The journalists agreed to make an apology and remove the [article](#)¹⁸.

30 September 24, Phnom Penh

Award-winning journalist Mech Dara, who is known for his extensive reports on human trafficking and cyber scam compounds in Cambodia, was arrested on September 30, 2024, and placed in pre-trial detention at Kandal provincial prison on charges of incitement to disturb social security over social media posts.

He was arrested while traveling from Preah Sihanouk to Phnom Penh on September 30, 2024. Dara was released on bail on October 24, 2024, after apologizing to Hun Sen, the head of Senate, and [Prime Minister Hun Manet](#)¹⁹.

17 September 24, Stung Treng

A journalist with Intri Plus News, who often reported on environmental issues in Stung Treng province, was charged by the provincial court for incitement and encroaching on forest land.

On September 17, 2024, the lawyer said the journalist was questioned by the provincial court on charges of incitement to commit a felony by encroaching on forest land. He is alleged to have committed the offenses in 2023 and 2024. The journalist has been placed under [judicial supervision](#)²⁰.

9 September 2024, Oddar Meanchey

The publisher of online media Thgnai Thmy was sued for incitement to discrimination following a report on buildings owned by “powerful individuals,” which had allegedly been rented out for illegal online gambling operations in Oddar Meanchey province.

A court warrant issued on September 16, 2024 ordered the publisher to appear in Phnom Penh Municipal Court on October 21 to be questioned on the accusation of incitement to discrimination.

¹⁸ <https://pfmsea.org/two-journalists-sued-complainant-seeks-200000-compensation-allegations-corrupt-practices>

¹⁹ <https://www.camboja.net/advocacy/articles/journalist-mech-dara-released-on-bail-after-apologizing-to-the-leadership/>

²⁰ <https://pfmsea.org/environmental-journalist-charged-clearing-forest-land-incitement-which-he-denies>

On August 25, 2024, the media outlet published a report saying that the building was inside the compound of a casino allegedly owned by tycoons Lim Heng and [Ly Yong Phat](#)²¹.

9 September 24, Phnom Penh

An online journalist with San Prum News was summoned for questioning on September 9 at the General Commissariat of National Police when a person, known as Mech Chanmuny, lodged a complaint.

On July 16, the journalist published an interview with a source about a land dispute. The journalist said the source herself mentioned a person called Chanmuny was allegedly involved in the issue.

The journalist was questioned and allowed to go home after the two parties agreed to end the [dispute](#)²².

25 July 24, Monduliri

A journalist from online Basith TV in Monduliri province who did a video on timber exports from Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary to Vietnam was questioned after a complaint was made by a police officer at Labakhe border checkpoint in Monduliri.

The report published on July 23 mentioned that “the border police chief had facilitated the illegal timber exportation to Vietnam.” Sa Phalla, border police chief at Labakhe, said he was not involved in the crime. Sa Phalla was not identified or mentioned in the report, but he said the video “intentionally” referred to him as border [police chief](#)²³.

11 July 24, Pursat

Four journalists from various media outlets were charged with violation of privacy and extortion for allegedly entering a restricted area of the Cambodian Mining Action Centre (CMAC).

Two of the outlets' publishers told CamboJA that their reporters received a phone call from a villager on July 11 informing them of some suspicious activities involving gold mining at Phnom Bak area in Pursat province.

²¹ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-sued-report-online-gambling-oddar-meanchey-province>

²² <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-questioned-interviewing-family-land-dispute>

²³ <https://pfmsea.org/monduliri-journalist-sued-border-police-officer-reporting-about-illegal-timber-exports>

One publisher said while entering the area, journalists saw a drone flying over them. They took pictures of it. Immediately, the authorities arrived and asked them to delete them. The journalists were arrested and taken to the [provincial police office](#)²⁴.

6 July 24, Kandal

Kandal provincial court charged online news GG TV Net's publisher with incitement to commit felony under Article 494 and 495 of the Criminal Code, and Article 10 of the Press Law.

He was sentenced to one year in prison and released after one month and fourteen days imprisoned, the remaining time suspended.

The journalist, who is a member of Neutral Press Association, was arrested on July 6, 2024, after publishing an article criticizing the local authority for not cracking down on online cockfighting and lotteries operating out of a coffee shop.

In the article, published with pictures of the provincial police and newly-appointed provincial governor Kouch Chamroeun, the writer said local authorities were ignoring illegal gambling activities, allowing it to [operate freely](#)²⁵.

12 June 24, Mondulhiri

An online journalist in Mondulhiri from Norkor Meas GTV was sentenced to three years in prison on charges of instigation to extortion, but the sentence was suspended.

He was accused with four other journalists in October 2023. Four journalists at the time were placed in pre-trial detention for six months before being released on bail in March 2024.

Mondulhiri provincial court's spokesperson, Meas Bros, said that the journalist was sentenced to three years in prison, with all unserved time suspended.

The journalist denied the allegation, saying that the court's decision was an [injustice](#)²⁶.

²⁴ <https://pfmsea.org/four-journalists-charged-violation-privacy-extortion-after-entering-prohibited-area-pursat>

²⁵ <https://pfmsea.org/kandal-journalist-charged-incitement-online-gambling-report>

²⁶ <https://pfmsea.org/online-journalist-receives-suspended-three-years-prison-sentence>

24 May 24, Kampong Thom

An online journalist in Kampong Thom province, who made a live video criticizing the director of a provincial environmental department and the authorities for alleged deforestation activities in the province, was charged with incitement and defamation.

The journalist was arrested by provincial police on May 24, 2024, after the Provincial Environmental Department filed a lawsuit against him in the provincial court on May 20 for incitement and defamation. He was sent to Kampong Thom prison for pretrial detention on May 26.

On November 6, 2024, he was sentenced to one year in prison for “incitement to discrimination” under Article 496 of the Criminal Code. He was released on bail and the rest of the sentence was suspended but he will be placed under supervision for [three years](#)²⁷.

23 May 24, Ratanakiri

A journalist from HPN News in Ratanakiri province was questioned by the provincial court after he published a report about “local authorities taking money from villagers”.

He said the court asked him to prove that his report was true.

On April 11, 2024, HPN News published a report that the authorities at the Virakchey National Park in Ratanakiri province’s Andong Meas district took money from villagers in exchange for them to enter the forest to collect fruit.

On April 25, the provincial court issued a summons, ordering the journalist to appear in court on May 23, 2024 to answer questions. He said the summons was not sent to him directly, but disseminated via [Telegram channel](#)²⁸.

16 May 2024, Pursat

Four online media outlets were sued for defamation and incitement to discrimination by local authorities in Pursat province after reporting on apparently illegal land clearing in Samkok wildlife sanctuary.

Four media outlets, including Phally News, BSN, Ray Phon and UKK News, reported on the land clearing in Samkok wildlife sanctuary in Pursat province’s Veal Veng district

²⁷ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-kampong-thom-arrested-and-imprisoned>

²⁸ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-summoned-questioning-after-reporting-bribery>

since February. The reports were published as articles and videos.

On February 22, the provincial environmental department issued a statement claiming the reports were not true and ordered the media outlets to [issue corrections](#)²⁹.

According to the court's statement, the media institutions were sued by three people, named Kon Khanda, the first deputy chief of Karpeu Pir commune; Yem Sam Bul, the commune clerk; and Sat Sokea, whose position is unclear.

13 May 24, Takeo

Two online journalists from LSN were arrested and detained for questioning by the Takeo provincial authority, accusing them of incitement and discrimination for reporting live on Facebook about the lack of water for irrigation in Angkor Borei district, which authorities declared as "fake news".

They were arrested by the provincial police on May 13, 2024, and detained for two nights at the provincial police headquarters for questioning.

Takeo provincial police accused the journalists of incitement and discrimination which caused chaos by making up fake news.

Both the journalists were sent to the provincial court for further questioning on May 15, 2024, and released later [that day](#)³⁰.

9 May 2024, Battambang

The Battambang provincial court upheld its earlier decision which convicted an online TV publisher for defamation under Article 305 of the Penal Code on May 9, 2024.

Sem Bora, publisher of TNM, was sentenced in absentia on December 27, 2023 and ordered to pay a fine of 4,000,000 riel (\$1,000) but the court verdict was only announced on January 11, 2024.

Bora rejected the decision and sought for a retrial, which was heard again by the same court on April 25, 2024. However, the decision was upheld on May 9.

Bora was sued by Battambang province's Ek Phnom district governor, Mil Sophal, for defamation after reporting on a land dispute on [October 25, 2022](#)³¹.

²⁹ <https://pfmsea.org/journalists-sued-defamation-and-incitement-reporting-land-clearing-pursat>

³⁰ <https://pfmsea.org/two-online-journalists-arrested-incitement>

³¹ <https://pfmsea.org/publisher-tv-online-convicted-defamation>

18 March 24, Kratie

A freelance journalist from Women's Community Voice Radio in Kratie province was summoned by a provincial court for questioning after he reported on a protest by indigenous people against the environmental authority.

The journalist was accused of inciting people to burn down the environmental office which occurred on August 5, 2023, in Sre Chis commune, Ou Krieng Senchey district. on March 2, 2024, he was summoned to appear before the provincial court for questioning on March 18, 2024.

He said the provincial court's investigative judge asked him to submit documents to prove that he was a [journalist](#)³².

28 February 24, Takeo

The editor-in-chief of Penh Chet Media was sued by a private company in Takeo province over reporting on suspicions that the company was illegally packaging cigarettes in a factory. The editor-in-chief told CamboJA the complaint was made on the day of the news report. He said before the complaint was made, he was asked by other online journalists to remove the article in exchange for money, but he refused.

The editor said he ultimately deleted the article at the request of the provincial Department of Industry, Mines and Energy. He said the legal dispute ended after he removed [the story](#)³³.

26 February 24, Monduliri

Keo Seima district administrative office summoned two journalists from BPNC News and Dermkrosang Daily, who live in Prey Veng province, to present themselves after reporting an alleged illegal logging.

The journalists told CamboJA that they traveled to Monduliri on February 27, 2024, but when they arrived there, they were told that the meeting was suspended without [reason](#)³⁴.

³² <https://pfmsea.org/radio-journalist-summoned-questioning-over-incitement>

³³ <https://pfmsea.org/online-journalist-sued-private-company-damaging-reputation>

³⁴ <https://pfmsea.org/two-journalists-summoned-monduliri-authority-over-report-illegal-logging>

19 February 24, Stung Treng

An online journalist at [Life and Sport News](#)³⁵ was allegedly threatened with legal action after the journalist wrote about claims of corruption involving the president of the Stung Treng provincial health department. On February 16, Life and Sport News published a report on irregularities involving the purchase of equipment, which were allegedly over-priced. The report cited an invoice from the supplier and included an interview with an official in the department, who asked not to be named. On February 19, 2024, the provincial health department issued a letter rejecting the report, saying that the information in the publication was not properly fact-checked, and that the journalist disseminated false information and lacked professionalism.

On June 15, 2024 the Ministry of Information issued letter informed the [media license revoked](#)³⁶.

17 February 24, Preah Sihanouk

Three online reporters from San Prum news were detained for questioning by police for 10 hours after they conducted an interview with families involved in a land dispute in Preah Sihanouk province.

During the detention, police forced them to have their mugshots taken and place their thumbprint on a document agreeing not to publish the report, or risk facing legal action. The journalist said police told them journalists from Phnom Penh have no right to cover news in the province. The next day, their mugshots were disseminated over Telegram and Facebook. The journalists said the public dissemination of their mugshots by district police violated their rights and harmed their dignity as they did not commit [any crime](#)³⁷.

16 February 24, Phnom Penh

Publisher of TN TV was sued by military officer for defamation and incitement after the journalist published a report on an issue involving the officer and a woman who allegedly loaned him \$1 million. On February 7, 2024, TN TV published an article about a dispute between a three-star general living in Kampong Speu province and the lender. Based on the report, the military officer allegedly borrowed \$1 million from the woman in October 2021 and failed to pay it back.

³⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=356295490631971>

³⁶ <https://pfmsea.org/stung-trengs-provincial-health-department-warns-legal-action-against-online-journalist>

³⁷ <https://pfmsea.org/three-online-journalists-detained-questioning-while-reporting-land-dispute>

Following the news report, the officer's lawyer sent a letter to TN TV on February 8, requesting it delete the article. The lawyer accused the journalist of exaggerating information with the intent to defame and incite, and of failing to seek comment or clarification from his client.

The general also filed a complaint with the Ministry of Information calling for the revocation of the outlet's [media license](#)³⁸.

24 January 24, Kratie

The publisher of New Network News was sued for defamation by a man apparently representing a rubber company, following a report on a land dispute in Kratie province's Snuol district. According to a complaint filed by Prum Chanthea at a provincial court on January 24, 2024, the journalist was accused of publishing false information and asked to pay a compensation of up to \$10,000 to the plaintiff.

New Network News published two reports about the protest against land clearing on January 12 and 18, 2024, which were reported live on Facebook.

Adhoc's coordinator in Kratie province told CamboJA that Prum Chanthea is a representative of Eastern Rubber (Cambodia) Co., Ltd. He said Chanthea had urged villagers to sell their land to the company, but people refused, resulting in protests. He said three other villagers have also been sued by [Prum Chanthea](#)³⁹.

Physical harassment:

7 December 24, Siem Reap

Chhoeung Chheng, a Siem Reap-based journalist with online media Kampuchea Aphivath, died three days after he suffered a gun attack.

The 63-year-old was shot in the abdomen by an assailant on December 4 as he was travelling in Chi Kraeng district in Siem Reap province to report on a forest crime in a forest conservation area.

The authorities released a statement stating that a suspect had been apprehended, and allegedly confessed to the shooting of Chheng over a personal conflict.

³⁸ <https://pfmsea.org/publisher-online-tv-sued-military-officer-defamation-and-incitement>

³⁹ <https://pfmsea.org/online-journalist-kratie-sued-defamation-after-reporting-land-dispute>

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on December 8 called on Cambodian authorities to ensure that all parties responsible for the attack are severely punished, and urged the Cambodian government to take concrete actions to end violence against journalists. It said the murder is appalling and demands a [strong response](#)⁴⁰.

21 November 24, Siem Reap

Journalist from Moha Khmer News was physically assaulted by a provincial military police while Siem Reap Post journalist had his phone damaged when they were filming a live report at the National Museum in Siem Reap.

The journalist said while he was filming, the officer approached him and asked for his press card. The journalist produced his ID card issued by his institution but the officer yelled at him and tried to grab his smartphone.

The next day, the journalists and the officer were asked to settle their case to end the dispute, which was mediated by the provincial military police.

The journalist, whose smartphone was damaged, received compensation, and the officer apologised for [his action](#)⁴¹.

21 September 24, Banteay Meanchey

A journalist from SNTV Breaking News in Banteay Meanchey Province was physically harassed while doing a video report of a traffic accident.

On September 21, 2024, the journalist was pushed to the ground and his smartphone snatched by a man who is alleged to have caused the accident as the journalist prepared the video report.

The journalist said the case was solved after his publisher advised him not to not publish the news.

The journalist said his smartphone was returned to him after military police officers [intervened](#)⁴².

⁴⁰ <https://pfmsea.org/siem-reap-environmental-journalist-succumbs-injury-after-being-gunned-down>

⁴¹ <https://pfmsea.org/two-siem-reap-journalists-physically-assaulted-military-police>

⁴² <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-physically-harassed-during-live-report-traffic-accident>

11 August 24, Ratanakiri

A TV reporter in Ratanakiri was detained inside a private plantation in Ratanakiri province for four hours when he entered to cover a mining issue. The land was reportedly owned by a “powerful individual” in Phnom Penh.

The journalist was later released around 7pm when he made an apology and agreed to sign a contract not to release the news.

The journalist said the landowner warned that she would bring a legal action against him and accused him of entering the private area without permission with an intention to extort [money](#)⁴³.

27 June 24, Banteay Meanchey

An online journalist in Poipet City says he was physically assaulted and arrested by military police while covering a crackdown on “anarchic activities” in Banteay Meanchey province on June 27.

When contacted by CamboJA on June 28, Poipet military police said it was not a “case of arrest”, rather they “wanted to ensure that the journalist did not interfere in their work” as he “was not carrying his press card” to indicate that he was tasked with covering news.

The journalist was released three hours later after being asked to sign an agreement not to write about the arrest in the [media](#)⁴⁴.

2 March 24, Banteay Meachey

Three journalists from Sameang Hot News in Banteay Meanchey were assaulted by a group of people while preparing to report live on Facebook regarding a gambling activity in Poi Pet town.

A journalist said that on March 2, 2024, journalists from three different institutions went to the place in order to make report on the activity. That was about 8pm, he said. After he had taken some pictures and prepared to report live, a group of people appeared and beat the journalists using sticks and rocks.

The journalists immediately filed a complaint with the commune police, but no action was [taken](#)⁴⁵.

⁴³ <https://pfmsea.org/ratanakiri-journalist-briefly-detained-after-entering-plantation-cover-mining-activity>

⁴⁴ <https://pfmsea.org/journalist-banteay-meachey-physical-assaulted-military-police-while-covering-news>

⁴⁵ <https://pfmsea.org/three-journalists-beaten-while-reporting-gambling-activity>

Other harassments:

5 December 24, Phnom Penh

A freelance journalist reported questioned by an unnamed individual about the documentary report produced by foreign-based media on the environmental issue.

A journalist said the phone number called him, and he later saved in Telegram channel showed the name as Makara or nickname "Ty Hun".

The journalist said on December 11, 2024, at 8:14 pm, he received a phone call, from a man, asked him about the documentary produced by the foreign media which focused on the situation of environmental resources in Cambodia.

The journalist was asked by the man during phone call if he had supported filming documentary. The journalist was also asked about the location of the dam featured in the film and if it had used footage from other countries.

5 December 24, Phnom Penh

A videographer from CamboJA News and a female citizen journalist were banned from interviewing and filming 100 citizens who gathered in front of the Phnom Penh City Hall to demand Governor Khoung Sreng to expedite the issuance of land title.

According to the video journalist, an official from the city hall suddenly arrived and stopped the residents from talking to them while he was filming the interview.

The official claimed that the journalists were working for political purposes. In the video shared with CamboJA's team, the official was seen shouting and pointing at the video journalist to turn off his camera.

The journalist said the official shouted at him twice which scared them and decided to turn the camera off to protect the [safety](#)⁴⁶.

2 December 24, Preah Vihear

A female journalist who often joins online programs on press freedom in Cambodia believes that she has been put under surveillance by the unknown person.

⁴⁶ <https://pfmsea.org/videographer-female-citizen-journalist-banned-interviewing-protestors>

According to the journalist, a person living next to her parents' home in Preah Vihear province showed her parents a screenshot of her during an online live show. The person told her parents that the picture was sent by a person who asked for her home address on December 2.

The person was quoted as saying, "Do you know a female journalist who lives at Por Breme? And where is her home?", when he spoke to the journalist's parents.

The journalist said she received this information from her parents on December 3, 2024.

On November 28, 2024, the journalist joined an online talk show conducted by a local rights group to discuss "Freedom of expression and freedom of the press".

The female journalist thinks that this is a sign that she and her family were under surveillance, which caused her to be concerned about their [safety](#)⁴⁷.

21 August 24, Phnom Penh

Two freelance journalists were warned by Phnom Penh deputy governor Keut Chhe that they cannot continue their journalistic work without a valid press card issued by the Ministry of Information.

The journalists who contacted the deputy governor for an interview relating to land issue and political party were requested by Chhe to submit their press cards to him for verification to prove that they are "real journalists" before he can comment.

One of the journalists said after he sent his press card, he was told his press card was not valid and asked to respect the profession. "He said if I continue [without a valid press card], he will report me to the authorities. He said I was in an illegal profession and my name does not exist in the ministry."

The other freelance journalist experienced the same issue when he tried to interview Chhe about the delay in the congress of National Power Party.

"He [Chhe] said he will tell the authorities to find and arrest me. He warned me to be careful or he will sue me if I ask for his comment again," the journalist said.

⁴⁷ <https://pfmsea.org/female-journalist-believed-be-under-surveillance-authority>

14 August 24, Phnom Penh

A publisher for TP News death threatened by unidentified person, this journalist refused to give interview to CamboJA as he said this case already closed as he accepted the facilitation by higher position person as he said and he mentioned the perpetrator also very high position. his post on facebook then deleted.

30 January 24, Phnom Penh

Journalists from several news outlets including Radio France International (RFI), CamboJA and Voice of America (VOA) were not permitted into the courtroom for a hearing involving Kem Sokha, a former leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party. Journalists who had pre-registered for the hearing were told that the courtroom was full.

CamboJA reporters had registered for all three hearings, but a court official informed reporters a day after the registration that they would not be able to attend due to space constraints. Local rights group Licadho, which monitors court hearing procedures, issued a flash info flash info update noting that the public was restricted from the hearing, including [journalists](#)⁴⁸.

4 January 24, Svay Reang

A journalist for online outlet Luos Seng News was banned by border police from covering a story at the corridor of Bavet border checkpoints in Svay Rieng province, where goods are transported between Cambodia and Vietnam.

The journalist was asked by police to show his media license and a permission letter issued by the [provincial information department](#)⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=369>

⁴⁹ <https://pfmsea.org/online-journalist-banned-covering-news-border-checkpoint>

Report cases of harassments

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