

JOINT STATEMENT

Threats Against Cambodian Analysts are Threats Against Freedom of Expression in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, 21 September 2021 – We, the undersigned national and international non-governmental organizations, unions, and communities, call on the Royal Government of Cambodia (“RGC”) to cease its intimidation of Cambodian analysts and other critical voices for their views and opinions on matters of public interest in Cambodia and uphold the freedom of expression.

In a speech made on 17 September 2021, the Prime Minister “warned” Cambodian analysts for their comments on Cambodia’s foreign policy. In particular, an analyst who recently made critical comments on Cambodia’s foreign policy with China, Dr. Meas Nee, was identified by name and told not to be “arrogant”. The Prime Minister also revealed that an arrest warrant was issued for another analyst who had made a Facebook post listing six conditions for the formation of a unity government. The analyst, later identified as Dr. Seng Sary, was warned that if the post was not removed from Facebook, he would be considered to be *in flagrante delicto* and arrested. However, on 20 September 2021, the Prime Minister said in a Facebook post he recognized the important work that political analysts carry out in the country’s national interests, and requested the court to end legal proceedings against Dr. Seng Sary.

Threats against political analysts exercising their freedom of expression should never be tolerated. Such threats threaten everyone’s freedom of expression, which is protected under both domestic and international law. Freedom of expression as a fundamental freedom cannot be selectively upheld, it must apply to all legitimate and peaceful speech. Political analysts should be able to perform their legitimate work and publish their findings – even if they are unfavourable to the RGC – without threats or warnings of any kind.

We call on the RGC to stop punishing the expression of criticism or dissent as a crime and urge the government instead to demonstrate openness and a willingness to listen, and to respect the right to freedom of expression of all in Cambodia, even and especially when it is critical of RGC policies.

This statement is endorsed by:

- 1 Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT)
- 2 Building Community Voice (BCV)
- 3 Cambodia’s Independent Civil Servants Association (CICA)
- 4 Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
- 5 Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
- 6 Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF)
- 7 Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)

- 8 Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
- 9 Cambodian Independent Teacher Association (CITA)
- 10 Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
- 11 Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
- 12 Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
- 13 Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
- 14 Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
- 15 Coalition of Cambodian farmer Community (CCFC)
- 16 Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
- 17 Community Peace-building Network (CPN)
- 18 Equitable Cambodia (EC)
- 19 Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
- 20 Khmer Kampuchea Krom for Human Rights and Development Association (KKKHRDA)
- 21 Manushya Foundation
- 22 Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free & Fair Elections in Cambodia
- 23 Ponlork Khmer (PKH)
- 24 Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
- 25 The Advocacy and Policy Institute (API)
- 26 The Asia Democracy Network
- 27 Transparency International Cambodia (TIC)
- 28 Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP)