

## Joint Statement

### **New Prakas Lacks Consultation, Further Restricts Media Freedom**

Phnom Penh, 15 December 2025

We, the undersigned media and civil society organisations, are dismayed by the Ministry of Information's new Prakas on "Qualifications and Journalistic Professionalism," issued on 27 November 2025, alongside the recent changes to press card requirements. Taken together, these measures will make reporting more difficult, more dangerous, and further constrict an already fragile media landscape.

The Prakas introduces an extensive licensing and qualification system covering not only newsrooms, but also independent journalists, content producers, popular figures, and even technicians. It mandates a wide range of approvals from the Ministry of Information, including ministry-approved journalism certificates, formal assessments of competency, and detailed structural requirements for media outlets. For individual journalists, it imposes strict conditions such as letters of "good conduct" from local authorities, criminal record checks, health certificates, and a requirement to have "never been subject to complaints" related to their work, a standard so broad and undefined that it could disqualify reporters simply for having published stories powerful actors dislike.

These obligations are compounded by the new 2026 press card rules, which require reporters to affirm they are not the subject of any legal complaints or court cases. Cambodian journalists who have faced lawsuits, threats, or criminal charges, often in direct response to legitimate reporting, could be denied accreditation essential for accessing information, interviewing officials, and safely conducting work in the field. Freelancers, independent reporters, and those covering environmental, land, corruption, and political issues are particularly vulnerable.

Cambodia's press freedom environment has already deteriorated markedly in recent years, with Reporters Without Borders ranking the country 161 out of 180 globally, marking a fall of 10 places since 2024. These new regulations, introduced without broad consultation, risk accelerating that decline. The Ministry's expanded authority to revoke qualifications or suspend licenses will inevitably restrict critical reporting and dissuade many from covering sensitive subjects.

Professional standards and high-quality journalism are vital goals shared across the media community. However, such standards must be developed transparently and with accountability,

in consultation with journalists, media organisations and civil society, and must not be used as mechanisms of control. Cambodia's existing Press Law includes mechanisms for dealing with media complaints and the publication of alleged factual errors, making further regulation such as the newly issued Prakas unnecessary.

We urge the Ministry of Information to revise these measures, engage meaningfully with stakeholders, and ensure that any regulatory framework protects, rather than restricts, independent journalism in Cambodia.

**This joint statement is endorsed by:**

1. Association to Support Vulnerable Women (ASVW)
2. Building Community voice (BCV)
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
4. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
5. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
6. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
7. Cambodian Organization for Women Support (COWS)
8. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
9. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
10. Environment and Health Education Organization (EHE)
11. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
12. Mondulkiri Indigenous People's Association for Development (MIPAD)
13. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
14. Overseas Press Club of Cambodia (OPCC)
15. The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW)