

Joint Statement

Media Groups and Civil Society Urge Stronger Press Freedom Safeguards in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, 30 April 2026— To commemorate the World Press Freedom Day (May 3), we, the undersigned stakeholders, reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and the indispensable role of a free, independent, and pluralistic media in Cambodia, the wider region and across the world. As the global community commemorates this day under the theme “Shaping a Future at Peace: Promoting Press Freedom for Human Rights, Development, and Security,” we once again reassert that an enabling media environment is a gateway to improved accountability, rights enjoyment and informed societies.

We have chosen to commemorate this day under the national theme, **“Fostering a Free and Responsible Media for Peace and Development.”** We emphasize that a professional and ethical media environment is vital to supporting Cambodia’s sustainable progress and good governance.

The lack of protection for journalists’ safety and independent reporting, particularly during times of crisis, has prevented the public from accessing truthful information and instead allowed disinformation and misinformation to spread. This was reflected in the Cambodia–Thailand border conflict last year, which demonstrated the crucial role of independent media in providing fact-based reporting on issues of security, peace, and conflict, and in informing the public about matters that directly affect them.

In this regard, a truly enabling environment cannot exist without the assurance of safety and legal protection for those carrying out this crucial work. Regrettably, journalists reporting on the conflict faced [significant challenges](#), restrictions and [legal harassment](#) due to their professional work.

From January to April 2026, CamboJA documented 14 cases of violations against journalists. These included two journalists placed in pre-trial detention, six detained, five summoned and one case of intimidation. In 2025, CamboJA [documented](#) 61 violations, affecting 57 journalists. Of these, 45 cases involved legal action or intimidation. Two journalists were sentenced to 14 years in prison on charge of supplying a foreign state with information prejudicial to national defence.

These figures highlight the urgent need for a safe and professional environment where journalists can operate without fear of judicial harassment. The situation is further reflected in the World Press Freedom Index 2026 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which ranked Cambodia 151st out of 180 countries —still ‘a very serious situation in the global context where more than half of the world’s countries falling under ‘difficult or serious categories for press freedom.

The introduction of some new Prakas/ regulations also compounded these concerns. New requirements on journalism qualifications and press card issuance—including certifications of

good conduct and declarations of no legal disputes—introduced additional administrative barriers to practicing journalism.

Ensuring the safety of media actors is a **shared responsibility**. We call for continued constructive dialogue among all stakeholders including government bodies, media organizations, civil society, and development partners to address emerging challenges. By strengthening our collective voices and upholding international human rights frameworks, we can ensure that journalists are able to work freely, safely, and independently. Together, we reaffirm our shared commitment to media freedom as a central pillar for promoting human rights, peace, and social cohesion for all Cambodians.

We urge the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and all relevant stakeholders to take the following actions:

Recommendations to the government:

1. Refrain from bringing criminal charges against journalists and citizen journalists in relation to their journalistic work.
2. Repeal the new requirements on journalism qualifications and press card issuance.
3. Immediately drop pending charges and review criminal sentences against journalists and human rights defenders and investigate cases of violence against these groups.
4. Ensure that ongoing and future regulatory developments regarding digital media and artificial intelligence (AI) are conducted in transparent consultation with relevant parties and align with international human rights frameworks.
5. Guarantee Physical and Digital Safety by implementing concrete protection mechanisms to ensure that journalists can work without fear or pressure.
6. Promote Access to Information by expediting the adoption of a robust Law on Access to Information that meets international standards to empower both journalists and citizens.

Recommendations to development partners, media organizations, and donor:

1. Provide training on fundamental principles of journalism, code of ethics and related laws and freedoms.
2. Provide training on journalist safety, including physical and digital security.
3. Provide psychological support to journalists.
4. Provide legal support to journalists when they have been accused and charged.
5. Provide dedicated support, training and resources to units tasked with investigating crimes against journalists, and training on a gender-sensitive manner.

This joint statement is endorsed by:

1. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
2. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
4. Center of Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)
5. Partnership for Environment and Development (PED Cambodia)
6. Communication and Media Promotion Organization (CMPO)
7. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
8. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense for Human Rights (LICADHO)
9. Kiripost
10. Cambodian Female Journalists (CFJ)
11. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (Comfrel)
12. Building Community Voices (BCV)
13. Cambodian Youth Network – CYN